SOUND CONSIDERATIONS FOR TENDER CONSCIENCIES;

Wherein is shewed their

OBLIGATION

To hold close Union and Communion with the

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

And their Fellow Members in it, and not to forsake the publick Assemblies thereof.

In several SERMONS preached, upon 1 *Cor.* I. 10. and *Heb.* 10. 25.

By *Joseph Briggs* M. A. vic. of *Kirkburton*, in *Yorkshire* resident near 70 yrs Buried there

Qui Christum sine Ecclesiâ quærit, errare & fatigari potest, at invenire non potest. Venerabilis Beda *in* Can. 6. 1.

London, Printed for *Nathaniel Brooks* and are to be sold at the *Angel* in *Cornhil*. 1675.

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To the Right Worſhipful

Sr. *John Kay* of *Woodſum Farnley*, Baronet, one of his Majeſties Juſtices of Peace of the Quorum, and Deputy Lieutenent for the Weſtriding of *York* *J. B.* Wiſheth all Mercy and Comfort in Chriſt Jeſus, both now and for ever.

Right-worſhipful,

YOu and all good men would think it no ſmall happineſs to the Chriſtian World, if true Religion might reign as a Law unthwarted, unoppoſed, and the Orthodox Faith, being obſcured by no Queſtions and

Cavils were onely publiſhed and not diſputed. Faith and Religion may fitly be reſembled to a pure and liquid ſtream, which becomes muddy being troubled; and as by an Inundation of water the Field or Meadow adjoyning is turned into an miry pit: So when Contentions, which the wiſe man compares to an overflowing of water, overſpreads the green Paſtures of Sacred truth, much filth of error thereby cleavs to them. Hence have Faith and Religion themſelves come into queſtion, though of all other things they be moſt certain and indubitate; And as plants often removed cannot take root and proſper, ſo Faith and Piety being removed out of their ancient ſtanding, and bended this way and that way according to

mens

mens humors, looſe their reverence and ſtability, and do decay in the lives of men, and Atheiſm gets ground. Hence it is that, one gainſaying another, one plucks down what ſhould be by a common labour and conſent built up. And hence it is, that as it is impoſſible for a man to follow guides whoſe backs are turned each of other, and their faces a clean contrary way; ſo Gods people, who ſhould be led by their ſpiritual guides in one beaten path of *Faith* and Godlineſs, are with unſpeakable peril diſtracted (not knowing what to do) while their leaders call them contrary wayes. By this (in a word) do we Chriſtians become a *Reproach* both to Jewes and Gentiles, and we Proteſtants to the deriſion of Turks and Papiſts

while our Church is broken in ſo many factions, while *Aarons* bells do jangle all men are in an uproar and fall together by the Ears, and the fire of unchriſtian animoſities become too often like that of the Temple, never to be extinguiſhed. But, which is the worſt of all, Religion hereby becomes (as it were) heart eaten. I mean, the heart of it, that is, the practiſe of Holineſs and Righteouſneſs, daily decayeth, for when ſome men are loath to put themſelves to the trouble of an holy life they readily liſt themſelves under a party, not doubting to acquire to themſelves a glorious name, if they be but zealous in the defence of a tittle or punctilio, how careleſs ſoever they be in the eſſential duties of the Kingdome of God.

Indeed

*I*ndeed how this ſhould be, how the Chriſtian *R*eligion ſhould be quarrell'd about, is next to a Miracle, conſidering what benignity and ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, what candour and ingenuity of *S*pirit, what humility and mutual condeſcention it requireth! But *aut hoc non eſt Evangelium, aut non ſumus Evangelici*; Either this is not the *R*ight practice of Chriſtianity, or it is not calculated for our Meridian, wherein abound ſo much pride and uncharitableneſs, ſo many ſtrifes and diviſions, ſo much wrath and envy, confuſion and every evil work. *H*ow far different are ours to thoſe pure primitive times wherein *R*eligion truely flouriſhed; *F*or then was the ſpirit of Meekneſs and gentleneſs and peacableneſs accounted the

indiſpenſable duties and characteriſtical notes of real Godlineſs. The greateſt inſtance of piety in the firſt Chriſtians was to dye and not to fight for Chriſt; they had not then learnt to make way for Doctrines or opinions by the dint of the ſword. And ſurely no reaſon can be alledged why †Chriſtians ſhould not act by the ſame rule and ſtand upon the ſame ground now as then? But that can never be, while theſe partition walls are daily ſet up amongſt us? while men are dayly forſaking our Church Aſſemblies and racking their brains, and purſes and intereſts to found or defend their private Meetings in oppoſition unto them. Indeed this ſeems to be the way to perpetuate a ſchiſm in the midſt of us, and as it were to eſtabliſh it by a

† Miniſters

Law,

Law, which we and our Poſterity may have ſad cauſe to lament, when it is paſt all prevention or Cure.

To prevent the unſpeakable Miſchiefes (the *Prologue* of utter deſtruction) I conceive it the duty of all men in their ſeveral places, to beſtir themſelves in time, but eſpecially of Magiſtrates and Miniſtry, and it is my ambition to be ſome way inſtrumental to remove the cauſes, which hath (willingly) carried me to this hazard, firſt to Preach and then to Print theſe enſuing Sermons. How ſerviceable they are to the end for which they are deſigned I leave it to your Worſhips conſiderations to determine.

Indeed when I firſt reſolved to publiſh them I could have no diſ-

pute

pute with my ſelf to whom to dedicate them. Firſt, upon the account of my great perſonal obligations to you, for thoſe conſtant reſpects you have been pleaſed to expreſs unto my perſon ever ſince *I* had the happineſs to be acquainted with and ſeated near you, and alſo for that eminent love of God and his Church and truth the world hath experienced, and muſt upon all occaſions gratefully acknowledge in you, to the praiſe of God that raiſeth up ſuch worthies. Beſides, the very matter of the book ſeems as much to concern your ſelf and other good Magiſtrates, as us the Miniſters of the Church. *For* theſe two Offices are ſo intimately related; Church and State, Prince and Prieſt, Magiſtrate and Miniſter are ſo nearly and naturally

rally conjoyned in a mutual interest, that like *Hippocrates* his twins they rejoyce and mourn, flouriſh and periſh together. They have moſt what in all ages fared alike in the world Both are deputies under, and inſtruments of, and actors for God in their ſeveral Miniſtrations. And therefore, the Devil doth alike malice them both, and ſtirs up his inſtruments, either to corrupt them, or remove theſe ſacred functions from their purity and integrity if it be poſſible, or elſe to diſquiet and deſtroy them. God leadeth his people like a flock by the hands of *Moſes* and *Aaron**, and therefore the enemies of the flock have an equal ſpite to both theſe two leaders. In all Ages of the Church almoſt, ſince it was conſtituted and eſtabliſhed, and ſince Kings

* Pſ. 37. 20.

and

and Queens have become the nurſing Fathers and nurſing Mothers thereof, if the one have proſpered ſo have the other; and if the times were dark and gloomy and adverſe to the one ſo have they to the other.

As for our preſent diſtractions, However the adverſary may with ſmooth words ſofter than butter, ſtroke the Magiſtrate & flatter him into contentment and ſatisfaction, as if things where as well or better in a ſtate of indulgence and Toleration than they were before, and however they may ſtrive to reduce him into a *Gallio's* temper not to be troubled or careful for any of theſe matters, yet in my opinion the caſe ſeems harder to Magiſtrates that have care and conſcience to ſerve the Lord in that capacity, and

to preſerve his Church in truth and peace, than to the *Miniſters* of the Church. For whereas, our Mouths (bleſſed be God) are not ſhut though our adverſaries are opened, but we may ſtill freely lift up our voices as a trumpet to tell *Juda* of her ſins and ſo deliver our own ſouls; yet (alas) the *Magiſtrates* hands ſeems to be bound by the ſuſpenſion of the Lawes, ſo that he cannot proceed in the diſcharge of his office with courage & efficacy.

In this caſe what ſhould *Aaron* do but lift up *Moſes* his hands? it remains that *I* and my Brethren ſhould call upon you and yours, not to be diſmayed at theſe things but wait upon God in the *Faithful* fulfilling of your duties to your utmoſt power, not doubting but that God hath his time, his proper

proper ſeaſon for all things, and while he governs the world, all things will work together for the good of the Church in the end.

I ſhen, in ſtead of ſpeaking *Placentia*, pleaſing things (for with *Elihu* in *Job*, * I ſay, Let me not, I pray you, accept any mans perſon, neither let me give any flattering titles to man; nay, I know you are not troubled with ſuch itching ears as love to be tickled with your own commendations, true Vertue is ever humble) if then, *I* ſay, inſtead hereof *I* may preſume to offer a word of exhortation to him, whoſe love to Gods word is known to all men, I beſeech you to go on to approve your ſelf more and more in all truth of heart before the judging eye of the Almighty, a Patron of the truth, a friend

* Job, 32. 21

of

of Vertue a discountenancer of vice, a shield and defence to the Godly in all grief and distress, a Father of your Country, a Religious Governour of your *Family*, a Pattern of *Piety*, and a *Persevering* Orator at the Throne of Grace for the peace of *Jerusalem*, saying ever with Holy *David*, we wish you good luck ye that are of the House of the Lord.

Question not (*Right-worshipful*) but the Lord will ever be with you while yoube thus with him, do but learn more and more to know him, the Lord God of your *Fathers*, and to serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind, and it shall be well with you and with your posterity after you, to many, many generations. This God of all *Power* and Mercy multiply his

his Spirit and all the bleſſed Fruits thereof upon your Worſhip, your truely Vertuous Lady, your hopeful Off-ſpring, your Religious Family, and Grant you that Grace which hath the promiſe both of this life and that which is to come. Which is the hearty Prayer of him, who in a grateful acknowledgement of all your favours, preſumes (yet humbly) to preſent. This ſmall part of his labours to your Worſhips peruſal and protection (as being a probable way to ſecure themſelves of others welcome and acceptance) and will for ever endeavour to approve himſelf,

Your moſt Obliged and Faithful Servant to his utmoſt power unto death.

J. B.

Reader, the Authors great absence from the press hath disabled him utterly from preventing numberless mistakes in words and pointing. I pray thee amend with thy Pen, as thou readest, these gross ones; and the rest, I hope, thou wilt thy self easily discern and courteously pardon.

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To his well beloved People, the members of the Pariſh of *Kirkburton*. And to every Chriſtian Reader, the Author wiſheth Grace and Peace

BELIEVE me, it is no vain-glorious Deſire of being in Print (it were a folly to hope for any acceſs of Reputation hereby in this ſo Critical and Cenſorious an age,) nor do I think the World wanteth books, and thoſe excellent ones, upon this ſubject; nor do I offer any new ſpeculations concerning it; nor do I plead (though perhaps I might as well as others) the importunity of any Chriſtian friends Invitation to embolden, encourage

courage or oblige me to this impression; nor these nor any of these did move me effectually unto it; But as it was that solicitous care I had of your present and everlasting Welfare that did at first engage me to Preach upon these subjects; so the very same fire burning still in my heart, being earnestly desirous the truths herein delivered may not be forgotten by you, even while you have use for them, this (almost irresistibly) urged me to enter upon the stage, to encounter the harsh Censures, I seriously expect for it.

These Sermons you know, (together with others upon other texts relating to this subject, which to imprint also, would swell the book to too great a bulk) ~~was~~ were preached both in Church and †Chappel. The design of them was evidently to deal with your Consciences and inform them aright in this present juncture of publick affairs, what your Obligation is to your own Pastors, and to prevent your Chismatical forsaking the Publick Assemblies to joyn to an †Independant Conventicle. (Pardon me if I mistake it, for I believe it cannot, as it is circumstantiated, consist with the principles of the old sober Presbyterians, nor yet with the Modern, that have any remains

† Holmfirth.

† Lidgate.

of

of ſettled principles concerning Church unity and Church *Aſſemblies in them). But having preacht them I eaſily perceived all my labours utterly loſt and uſeleſs to many that either would not or could not hear them, or elſe baſely without any ſhew of reaſon reflected on them. Hence I began to deſire, they might have ſome way of approving themſelves further to the World, and eſpecially that they might be expoſed with better advantage to your more ſerious and retired conſideration and peruſal, and if it were poſſible that they might be known unto, and narrowly examined by all under my charge. Theſe and other* Motives (*eſpecially knowing that other books of better worth of this or like ſubjects have never reacht your hands, nor in likelyhood ever will do*) *being entertained, prevailed and wrought a trembling reſolution in me to offer them firſt to ſome* Chriſtian *friends peruſal, and after to put them upon this publick tryal, though at firſt in compoſing them I never purpoſed more than the delivering them* (vivâ voce) *to your private audience.*

It is admirable to conſider how this particular national Church *ſuffers by Traduces and Blaſphemies on all hands.* Meet,

as Chriſt was crucified betwixt two thieves; ſo on the one ſide, the Papiſts Anathematize us (*the Faithful Miniſters and Members of the Church of* England) *becauſe we are the moſt profeſſed enemies to their uſurpations, Idolatries and ſuperſtitions: & on the other ſide the ſeparating Members of our Church do hate and maligne us, and ſometimes ſaucily and petulantly brand us with Popery and Idolatry, and ſo make us limbs of Anti-chriſt, and therefore no true or faithful Churches of Chriſt, and that meerly for thoſe few innocent, indifferent, & ſignificant ceremonies, which we retain and obſerve for the order and decency of the Worſhip of God. Thus are Chriſts ſheep in the midſt of Wolves. His Spouſe a woman in the Wilderneſs of wilde Beaſts of all ſorts; this is* Ephraim *againſt* Manaſſeh, *and* Manaſſeh *againſt* Ephraim, *but both againſt* Juda; Herod *and* Pontius Pilate *made friends, Phariſees and Sadducees combining and agreeing againſt Chriſt.*

But bleſſed be God ſo ſafe is our Church, and ſo warrantable is our ſtanding in it, that this Flag of Defiance we can hold out againſt all †Sadduces *and Opponents, that we have, (in moſt of our adverſaries confeſſions, thoſe things in the Midſt of us that in the judgements of all the Reformed*

† Seducers.

Churches

Churches (as may appear by the Harmony of their confeſſions) are the only undoubted marks and infallible characters of a true Viſible Church, where ever they are. Such are the pure preaching of the Word of God, and the Right Adminiſtration of the Sacraments. And this I made good to you upon that text, Acts 2.42. *which I truſt you will remember.*

Now whoever is once aſſured that the National Church *he lives in, and in which he was baptized, is a true Viſible* Church *of Chriſt. He can never have juſt cauſe (while it remains ſuch eſſentially) to ſeparate from it, but ought to live and reſt with quietneſs and chearfulneſs of Spirit in communion thereof. For it is every mans duty to profeſs himſelf a* Chriſtian, *and to own his Religion publickly, and therefore publickly to partake of and frequent the Ordinances and Sacraments of the Goſpel in order thereunto, but this he cannot do without ſociety and communion with ſome* Church *or other. Every* Chriſtian *as ſuch is bound to look upon himſelf as a member of a* Body. viz. *The Viſible* Church *of* Chriſt; *but how can he be known to be a member who is not united with the other parts of the Body?*

Hence follows, that upon all Chriſtians *there lyes an Obligation to engage in a Religious ſociety with others for partaking*

of the ordinances of the Goſpel. Now a Chriſtian, being actually joyned in Church ſociety with other Chriſtians, is ſo long bound to maintain ſociety with them, till his communion with them becomes ſin. The ſeparatiſt muſt prove that every one ſins that keeps in the Communion of the Church of England, *or elſe he himſelf muſt inevitably lye under the guilt of ſin for ſeparation from it, there being nothing that can juſtifie the withdrawing from the ſociety of that Church wherein a Chriſtian was baptized but the unlawfulneſs of continuing it.*

Nor is it any corruptions that are crept into a Church, which ſtill remaines true and and Faithful as to its conſtitution and Eſſentials, that will make it a Chriſtians duty to withdraw from it or to gather new Churches in and out of it, though it be upon pretence of purer adminiſtrations. (Which by the way) is all that is pleaded by moſt of our adverſaries againſt us, viz. *Some defects or Corruptions in the exerciſe and adminiſtration of Church order and diſcipline,) for there is no Church on earth perfectly free from theſe; and as it is proved in theſe enſuing Sermons (eſpecially upon the latter text.) So is it excellently done by the famous Mr.* Norton *in his anſwer to* Apollius *as I find him quoted by Dr.* Edward Stilling-

Stillingfleet *in his* Irenicum *p.*111. *That it is Lawful for Chriſtians to joyn with Churches ſo defective: and if it be Lawful to joyn with them it muſt needs be unlawful to ſeparate from them, for how can the God of Love and Unity endure any rents or Schiſmes in the* Body *of* Chriſt? *and then, how dare any one forſake the* Communion *of that* Church *whereof they are natural and immediate members, if they be not aſſured, that it is either no* Church *or a falſe one, or that it is unlawful to hold communion with it.*

This is evidently * *the* Caſe *of our* Church *in her ſeparation, from the* Church *of* Rome, *the main ground hereof being the ſin of Communicating with that* Church *in her Idolatry and ſuperſtition, and the impoſſibility of Communicating with her, and not partaking in her ſins, the practice of her Idolatry being made a neceſſary condition of her Communion. In this caſe it was evidently a ſin to* Communicate *with her, ſo that unleſs our Brethen can prove it a like ſin to* Communicate *with us in the* Church *of* England, *they can never juſtifie their ſeparation from us meerly for purer* Communion. *

* *A full reſolution here-of you have in* Dr. Stillingfleets Irenicum *p.* 112. *where though he grants a ſinleſs and unchiſmatical nonconformity to our Church, yet doth he explode any ſeparation from or erecting new Churches, in it meerly for purer adminiſtrations. and this I adviſe the Reader to oppoſe to* Mr. Baxters *Stating the caſe in his ſacrilegious deſertion, p.* 17

I need not fear to say, that it hath been made over and over apparent (for there are a numberless number of excellent books to convince the teachable) that there neither can be, nor is any separation from our Church, as it stands now constituted and established Nationally, but rash and unjust; and that those, that are carried away, are hurried with prejudice rather than with strength of Argument, and are commanded more with the example of others, their Masters and Rabbies, than with the authority of the Rule of Righteousness.

Now how manifold and dismal have been the mischiefes of such Schisme, and divisions, all Ages of the Church have sufficiently experienced, and we in this Nation as much as any. (O how woful have been the effects in our memory.) Our adversaries do not love to hear of them, but being gall'd they kick, O that they would yet declare to the world their repentance! But let them give us leave to think thereof, and to advise you our people sometimes to keep them in mind, and not to be such fooles, as whom neither others harms nor your own will make to beware. Are not the Experiments that have been already made of these Schisms sufficient to deter any reasonable man to take heed

Of any the new mediums? will you turn with the Dog to the vomit and with the Sow to the wallowing in the mire again, may perhaps in time (O that I may prove a false Prophet in this.) To wallowing in blood? But pardon me for this rough stile: I earnestly in the bowels of Christ beseech you in this word of softer exhortation to take heed of all Dividing wayes and methods. Examine and try this well if our Church be not free from all defects of any those things which are essentially requisite to make it a true and faithful Church in point of Doctrine and administration of the sacraments; for then it will follow, if you volxntarily separate your selves from our Assemblies from the Lords Supper or administration of the Sacraments in them you are guilty of the Sin of Shism, if you think it any sin at all, you shew your contempt to the Spouse of Christ and the ordinance of Christ; you encourage and animate the Atheist and Heretick, you Provoke God to withdraw himself and remove his Candlestick his Gospel from us; and as you rend and wound the Church which is the Body of Christ, so do you Wilfully excommunicate your selves from the Visible tokens of the Lords

* See the Anathemas of Ancient Councils and the Sentiments of the Ancient Fathers to the confusion of Schisme, in Dr. Forbes Irenicum, and of modern Divines in that pretty piece of Littlers Reformed Presbyterian.

Lords presence and Love. And if you can loudly complain (though too often causelesly) of your Church-Governours, if they deprive any member of the Church of communion with her by Excommunication, upon light and unnecessary occasions; how much greater sin is it in the Members to deprive themselves of the same communion upon the like or less occasions: saith that excellent incomparable book called The whole Duty of Man.

Now to remedy things, that a Coercive power is very lawful, nay, requisite, I for my part declare it to be my settled judgement, and that none did write or preach more vigorously to this purpose than those that now make themselves our adversaries, any one that hath eyes, may see in Mr. Ashdons *Book of* Toleration disapproved: *and why should it be an unpardonable offence to urge the same truths now upon better grounds, and with the same and more clear and convincing arguments?*

The Magistrate is Custos vindexque utriusque Tabulæ, *a Guardian as well of Divine as of humane Laws* Rom. 13. 4. *He is ordained of God to execute wrath upon all them that do evil. And are not false Teachers stiled evil workers.* * *And is not Heresie a fruit of the flesh?*

* Rom. 13. 4.

* Phil. 3. 4.

and

and what are ſeparating teachers but falſe teachers? and what are ſeparating Doctrines but unſound Doctrines? and is not unſound Doctrine reſembled to a canker * 2 Tim. 2. 17. *that corrodes the ſound Fleſh? And the Abetters and Fomenters thereof to Thieves that ſpoil, to ravening wolves that devour, and to deceitful works that undermine the truth†? now how the Chyrurgeon will cautorize or cut off a canker, or what penalty is due to Thieves, Wolves, and deceitful works, none is ignorant.* † 2 Cor. 11. 13.

Nor is the practice of this coercive power againſt Hereticks and Chiſmaticks, any new thing, that it ſhould ſeem ſtrange to any Chriſtians ears. In the time of the Law; Aſa, Jehoſhaphat, Joſiah, Nehemiah, *puniſhed abuſes in divine Worſhip. And under the Goſpel God by Miracles did for a time ſupply the want of Chriſtian Magiſtrates*; *ſmiting* Ananius *and* Saphyra *with ſudden death by* S. Peter, *and* Elymas *the Sorcerer with blindneſs, by* St. Paul. *And the Spirit of God condemns the Church of* Thiatira, *for not exerciſing her power to repreſs ſuch like, for ſuffering the woman* Jezebel *to teach and ſeduce Chriſts ſervants* *, *and reproves the Church of* Pergamus *for ſuffering them that taught the Doctrine of* Balaam *and* *Rev. 2. 20.

* Rev. 2. 14.

† Tert. ad vers. Gnost. cap 2.

† Aug. Ep. 48.

* Luke 14. 23.

entertaining them that held the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans *. And concurrent with Scriptures are the Primitive Fathers herein.* Tertullian † *saith, that Heresticks must be compelled not prayed to do their duties.* Athanasius *said that* Arrius, Eudoxius, *and* Patrophilus, *when they wrote unsound Doctrines were worthy of all punishments. St.* Augustine † *tells* Vincentius *that it is no parodox, that men ought to be forced to righteousness, for as much as he read that the Master said to the Servants, compel them to come in* *. *And that S.* Paul *was forced to receive and embrace the truth by a violent compulsion of Christ, except you should judge Lands and Goods dearer to men than their eyes. And this opinion that it is not lawful to deliver an incorrigible Heretick to the secular power and to inflict corporal and pecuniary mulcts, he sharply reproves in the Donatists,* Parmenianus, Petilianus, *and* Gaudentius *.

* Aug lib 1 contra Epist. Parmeniani cap. 7. & lib. 2. Contra literas petileam cap. 10. & lib. 2. contra Epistolam Gaudentii cap. 17. As I find Mr. Cragg in his Royal Prerogative severally quoting them.

Gregory Nazianzen *likewise* (Homil. in dict. Evangel.) *saith, cut off the Arrian impiety; cut off the errors of* Sabellius

lius: *This I say (saith he) to the Magistrate. Seeing my words have not that efficacy, their edict shall; if they will suppress such as are infected with pernicious Heresie.* Constantine *also the first Christian Emperour prohibited the Exercise of all unsound Religions either in publick or private places, commanding their books to be burned, their goods to be sold, their houses to be pulled down, and proscribed them as Traitors and Enemies to the truth* †. *In the late book of* Ecclesiastical *polity by Mr.* Parker, *it is evidently shown, (as I remember, for I have not the book by me) that the end of government cannot be attained, nor a Society preserved without a power in the Magistrate to impose some things not expressed in Gods word, and a Coercive and compulsive power to enforce it. And that this is no persecution (as it is by many falsely so called) is as evidently proved by Mr.* Ashdon *in his Preface to* Toleration disapproved. *Second Edition* 1670. *and whosoever list may read Mr.* Perkins *upon the foresaid Texts in the* Revelations *with several other English Authors upon this subject. All which do prove manifestly, that this power Coercive is lawful, nay, requisite for the well being of the Church.*

† *Eusebius in vit a Constantin. lib. 3 cap. 36.*

Now

Now, if the Magistrate have such a power, that he ought to exercise it for the preservation and establishment of the Church, and terror of the enemies thereof, as her Nursing Father and as a Defender of the Faith, will easily follow, this power being undoubtedly a talent committed to him as Gods publick Servant, and of it he must give an account for he ought not to bear the sword in vain. *

* Rom. 13. 4.

But since, through the restless Importunity of the Sects† our Gracious Soveraign is pleased for reasons best known to himself, and to his most Honourable Privy Council to suspend for a time this his power, and to lay his Laws asleep, till either their Modesty and good Behaviour be sufficiently tryed, or some way be found out to open a door of peace and Purity to all moderate adversaries without dishonour to the Lawes and Lawgivers in Church and State; (which God of his infinite mercy grant if it be his blessed will): it is not meet for any of his Loyal Subjects, much less for me that am the most unworthy of them, saucily or malapertly to make any publick judgement of, or any unbeseeming reflections upon this his Majesties action. Our part it is, with quietness of Spirit in the Churches broiles, to place all our trust

†

in

in him for our own, and the Churches preservation and prosperity, who governs the World, and is able to bring light out of darkness, good out of evil. Yet notwithstanding, his Majesties act being a bare permission of that which is evil in his own judgemennt, it cannot, I hope, be interpreted a transgression of our pastoral bounds to deal with the consciences of our people in this affair, and soberly and yet zealously to let them see their duty out of Gods Law, if they will see it, and if by any means they will be brought to the acknowledgment of, and obedience to the truth.

Now who knows but the Word of God may powerfully prevail to reclaim some from following the great Diana *of Schism with which so many well meaning Christians are unawares bewitched; or at least to preserve some in the unity of Faith and Love, who else may be trapaned by the fair speeches of those that lay in wait to deceive? I mean such deceivers (because deviders) as imitate the Pharisees, as in many other perticulars, so in this,* compassing Sea and Land to make proselytes seven times worse the children of Hell than themselves. *Who knows, I say, but the naked word of God, that sword of the Spirit, may be powerful† to the praise of*

† in this failure

the

the Magiſtratical Aſſiſtance which uſed by Coercive power to compel men to come into or keep within their juſt bounds and limits?

But whether it prove ſo powerful or no, we Paſtors muſt, whether encouraged by our ſuperiors or no, and whether men will hear or forbear and ſtop their ears to our Charmes or no, we muſt do our utmoſt: neceſſity is laid upon us to diſcharge our duty for your ſound information and eternal Salvation *. *Nothing is more certain than that we muſt do our parts and leave the ſucceſs to God, knowing his Word;* commit thy way unto the Lord, truſt in him and he ſhall bring it to paſs* *. *He of his infinite Mercy give a bleſſing to theſe our labours, that the builders may not build in vain, but his word may be effectual to advance his glory and further your Salvation, which if entertained with prejudice will render you inexcuſeable and aggravate your ſin and damnation at the day of Judgement.*

* Ezek. 33. 7, 8.

* Pſal. 36. 5.

THE

THE OBLIGATION OF CONSCIENCE TO UNION AND COMMUNION WITH ELLOW-CHRISTIANS.

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1 Corinth. 1, & 10. part of it.

t ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that ere be no diviſions amongſt you: but that e perfectly joyned together in the ſame nd, and in the ſame judgement.

T is a found and uſeful obſervation, that Mr. *Baxter* makes in his *Cure of Church-Diviſions.* There is in many iſtians (alas) a ſtrange partiality in r apprehenſions of good and evil. e Duties they dare not omit, and judge all ungodly that omit them:

whileſt ſome other duties, as great as they, are paſt by and neglected, as if they were no part of Religion: and on the contrary ſome ſins they fear with very ~~very~~ great tenderneſs, when their Teachers can ſcarce make their Conſciences take any notice of others, as great and damnable. The Papiſt ſeems ſo ſenſible of the good of unity, and the evil of diviſions, that he thinks even Tyranny and horrid bloodſhed, and an Uſurpation of an univerſal Monarchy in the Church, to be not onely lawful, but alſo neceſſary for the cure and prevention: in the mean time to make him as ſenſible of the ſinfulneſs of theſe unlawful means, and the neceſſity of a ſerious, ſpiritual righteouſneſs, and Chriſtian love and meekneſs, and forbearance, is a very difficult, almoſt impoſſible thing. On the other ſide, many that are really deſirous to be ſerious and ſpiritual in Religion, abhorring all hypocritical formality therein, or any uſurpation of the Prerogative of Chriſt, or any perſecuting pride or cruelty, are yet ſtrangely ſenſeleſs; and careleſs of the good of unity, and the miſchiefs of diviſions in the Church. Its ſad that ſacred fire of zeal ſhould be ſo unequally acted, and diſ-

distributed, all let out upon some Duties, and against some sins, which others as necessary are as strangely overlookt. It brings to mind that cutting reprehension of the Pharisees by our Saviour, (a fit Looking-glass for many Zealots in our Age, so partial in God's Law) (a) *Woe unto you Pharisees* (saith Christ) *for ye tithe Mint, and Rue, and all manner of Herbs, and pass over judgement, and the love of God: these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* Well, if men will submit to the word of God; the antidote against this strange partiality, in the matter instanced, of Christian union and concord, is easily provided; there being almost innumerable rules and precepts in the Scriptures to convince us of it. Amongst which this Text is as full as any. *Now I beseech you Brethren, by the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions amongst you, but that ye be perfectly joyned together in the same mind, and in the same judgement.* a Lu 11.42.

Thus St. *Paul* wrote with his Brother *Sosthenes* to the Church of God, which was at *Corinth*, nor wrote he so to them onely: but (b) *with* them to *all that in* b verse 2.

every place call upon the name of the Lord Jeſus, both theirs and ours: The words then are ſpoken to us alſo, and all Believers in all places to the Worlds end. Now the Apoſtle intending to condemn many vices in theſe Corinthians, that he might not ſeem to do it out of malice, or ſpleen, or envy, he begins firſt with a true commendation of their gifts and vertues, that they were inriched in all knowledg, and in all utterance, that they came behind others in no gift (*c*). But alas, as knowledge is apt to puffe us up, ſo theſe Corinthians began in their pride to divide themſelves from each other: So that (*d*) one cryed, I am for *Paul*, another I am for *Apollo*, and a third I am for *Cephas*; therefore to make way for a ſharp reproof hereof, the Apoſtle brings in this grave obteſtation in the text. Now, *I beſeech you* (ſaith he) though I might be bold in Chriſt to enjoyn and command, yet for love ſake I rather beſeech you. *I beſeech you, Brethren*, I do it in the bowels and affections of a brother: Nay, and *by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, that is, by the power and authority of Chriſt, and for the honour and glory of Chriſt. I *Paul* ſo ſpeak as if Chriſt himſelf did ſpeak unto you. (For, alas, how

c verſe 7.

d verſe 12.

how the name of God, and how the Doctrine of Christ is blasphemed through your divisions, he that runs may read it) and therefore for his sake I beseech you. *By the Name of our Lord*, that is by vertue of that commission and authority, I have received from him, who is our Lord, and if he be our Lord, where is his honour: and in *the Name of our Lord Jesus*, he, who is your Saviour, and as you hope for Salvation by him: *Our Lord Jesus Christ*, he that is the anoynted of God, anoynted to be our Prophet, Priest and King; every word in the obtestation hath a sufficient weight to awaken us to attend it. What even this exhortation, *I beseech you, Brethren, by* that *Name of our* Lord *Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions amongst you, but that ye perfectly be joyned together in the same mind, and in the same judgement.* It is a strange kind of earnestness, and importunity the Apostle useth, as elsewhere, so here, in this matter. He was deeply sensible of the evil of divisions, how they prejudice Gods truth; for whilest they that profess it, cannot agree in it, the Fool is ready to scoff at it, *and to say in heart there is no God:* and how they endanger the Church

and weaken it; no engine, that Satan and Anti-chriſt can uſe, more than this, the cutting of it into ſhreds, like the Levites Concubine; the blowing of the Coals of contention in it: yea, how they endanger the Souls of men, by ſeparating them from the Church, and ſo from Chriſt, who is the head thereof. The Apoſtle was deeply ſenſible of the evil of diviſions, and therefore is ſtrangely, and more than ordinarily importunate in this Exhortation, uſhering it in with manifold obteſtations. See *Phil.* 2. 1, 2, *If there be any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort in love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any compaſſion and mercy, fulfil my joy, that you be like minded, having the ſame love, being of one accord, of one mind.* Epheſ. 4. 1, *I the Priſoner of the Lord beſeech you that you walk worthy of that vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowlyneſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Rom. 16. 17, 18, *Now I beſeech you, Brethren, mark them that cauſe diviſions among you, and avoid them, for they ſerve not our Lord Jeſus;* But to name no more, this in the Text is full enough, *Now I beſeech you Brethren, by*

the

the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, &c. *that there be no divisions among you.*

Which words being apparently an exhortation, must be handled in such method, as best suites with the nature thereof.

1. I must explain and propound it.

2. I must enforce and urge it by explication. I shall lay open the nature and extent of the (*objectum quod*) or duty to which we are exhorted. And then for the enforcing of it, I shall press sundry powerful motives upon your Consciences, to engage you to endeavour to practise it, and lay down wholesome rules and directions, for the better performing it, if the Lord inable me, the time permit, and your christian patience give encouragement.

1. To propound the Exhortation, I need not at all insist upon the words, they are so plain and intelligible in themselves, that being read, they may as easily be understood; and to offer to give any sense of them particularly, one by one, might render them more dark and obscure. Let it suffice to tell you, that the matter of duty in them contained is the unity of the Church, and the concord of Christians.

An univerſal accord amongſt them is to be endeavoured, ſo far as is poſſible in judgment, affection and action, this is the ſum and ſubſtance of the Text.

1. The Exhortation is to an unity in judgement; ſo the Apoſtle expreſly preſcribes it, in the latter words, *that ye be perfectly joyned together in the ſame mind, and the ſame judgment.* It is a thing much to be deſired, and by all good means to be endeavoured, that (according to our Churches prayer) God would give to all Nations, Unity, Peace, and Concord, but eſpecially that all, that do profeſs his holy Name, may alſo agree in the truth of his holy Word, at leaſt, in the main and moſt ſubſtantial truths thereof, and ſo that they may be perfectly joyned together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgement. But if this cannot be hoped for and attained in this life; yet,

2. That we muſt be ſure of to endeavour to preſerve an unanimity in heart and affection. Deſired it muſt be, but hoped for it cannot be, that in the Church of God there ſhould be no noiſe of Axes and Hammers, no difference in judgements and conceits. (e) *There muſt be Hereſies,* ſaith the Apoſtle, *that they that are approved*

(e) 1 Cor. 11. 19.

may

may be made manifest. There must be Heresies, even as we use to say, that that will be must be, is his meaning is, there will be Heresies, there is no help for it, the wit of men cannot help it.

The understandings of men are not all of one size and temper, God hath distributed his gifts unto men severally as he pleaseth, and even they that transcend in the same gifts, and have the largest and cleerest understandings, yet *they know but in part, and see through a glass darkly* and imperfectly, and so are subject to divers errors and misapprehensions. To which narrowness of our faculties, add the consideration of the corruptions that is in our natures, and disposition; by reason of that pride that naturally aboundeth in us, being self-willed and turbulent; for the heart of Man is a sowre piece of clay, woundrous stubborn and churlish, so that the best man is not able to take down his own pride sufficiently: there is more ado with this one Viper, than with all our other corruptions besides; and all those wars and fightings without us, what are they but the scum of this pot that boyles within us, the ebullitions of our lusts that war in our members (*f*). While there is then cor- *f* Jam. 4 1.

ruptions

ruptions in our natures, narrowness in our faculties, sleepiness in our eyes, difficulty in our profession, cunning in our enemies, δυσνοητα hard things in the Scriptures, and an envious man to super-inseminate, there will still be τὰ ἑτέρως φρονεῖν men that will be differently minded. No instrument was ever so perfectly in tune, in which the next hand that touched it did not amend something, nor is there any judgement so strong and perspicuous, from which another will not in some thing find ground of variance. In the History of the Ancient Churches we find the greatest lights in their several Ages at variance amongst themselves (g). All our comfort then is that the time will come, (but we must not look for it while the World lasteth) when the Son of Man will cause to be gathered out of his Kingdome τὰ σκάνδαλα all things that offend, or that minister occasion of stumbling or contention, *Mat.* 13. 41. but in the mean time *sinite crescere*, let both grow together unto the harvest, must have place, *ver.* 30. in this hard necessity therefore

(g) *Irenæus* with *Victor* (*Euseb. Hist. lib.* 5. *cap.* 26.) *Cyprian* with *Stephen* (*l.* 7. *c.* 31.) *Jerome* with St: *Austine* (*Aug. t.* 8. 19.) *Basil* with *Damasus* (*Basil Ep.* 10. and 77. *Baron. Annal.* 372. 15. 25.) *Chrysost.* with *Epiphanius* (*Sozomen l.* 8. *c* 14. 15.) *Cyril* with *Theodoret* (*Cyril lib. ad epoptium incep.* 10 *Hist. lib.* 14. *cap.* 55.) quoted by Dr *Reynolds* upon Rom. 4. 19.

fore, seeing for the present it cannot be hoped for, there should be such a consonancy and unity of judgement amongst all men; no, not among wise and godly men; but that in many things, and those sometimes of great importance, they may and must dissent one from another unto the worlds end, I say, in this hard necessity, that the first evil cannot be avoided, our wisedome must be to prefer the second, that where there is not perfection, yet there may be peace; good heed must be taken, least by the cunning of Satan, (who is very forward and expert to work upon such advantages) dissention of judgements break not out into dissentions of hearts: lest by different opinions our affections be estranged, and at last quite alienated one from another. It is one thing to dissent from, another thing to be at discord with our brethren. It should be the great care of Christians, instead of desiring to find occasions of cavils to separate from their brethren, saying *I am holier than thou*, by all means, to preserve as much as in them lies, in their several places and stations, the unity of Faith and Love, by which onely we are known to be Christs Disciples. You see the Disciples

diſciples of Chriſt, when they were waiting for the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon them, according to the promiſe of Chriſt they were ὁμοθυμαδὸν with one accord in one place. (h) *And as if they were one man, they were of one heart.* (i) The union and accord of heart amongſt Chriſtians, is the beſt diſpoſition that can be to prepare them, to receive the Spirit of Chriſt; yea, and is the beſt token and ſign that they have received it. Indeed this is the new Commandment the fulfilling of the Royal Law. It is Chriſt's Commandment, this is my Commandment, *that you love one another*: not but that the reſt are his Commandments too, but this is peculiarly, declared by his mouth, written in his blood, *Walk in love as Chriſt hath loved you* (k). But this love cannot conſiſt with thoſe diviſions and ſeparations which ſome men make from their brethren, not ſo much out of love to truth, as out of hatred and contempt of their perſons. That's the ſecond thing to which the Apoſtle exhorts in the Text, in this *ſpeaking the ſame things, and being if the ſame mind and judgement, and that there be no diviſions amongſt us*: It requires in caſe of different judgments, unanimity in heart and affections.

h Acts 2 1. i Act. 4. 32. k Eph. 5 2.

3. There

2. There is a third thing in the Exhortation, even uniformity in actions, this seems to be properly in the very letter of the Text, *that you all speak the same things*, for that we may do so, three things seem essentially necessary thereunto.

1. That you all submit to the same Government. For there is a necessity of Government to prevent confusion: of one Government both in Church and State to prevent division. Where there is an Anarchy or no Government, confusion must needs follow among the members. As it was in *Israel*, *When there was no King in* Israel *every man did that which was right in his own eyes* (l): and where there are in one body diverse Governments, division must needs follow among the members, as it was in *Israel*, when *Jeroboam* set up a faction against the House of *David* *, *for the transgressions*, and consequently for the punishments thereof, *many are the Princes thereof* (n). Indeed we in this Nation need not be told the miseries of no Government, or of many Governments, or many Governors, our own experience will sure, for one Age make us dread it, and inexcusable fools, if we desire it. We have all the reason then in the World to obey the Apostles precepts

(l) Judg. 17. 6

* 1 Kin. 12.

(n) Pro. 28. 2.

cepts of ſubmitting to them that of right are ſet over us: and being ſubject to every Ordinance of Man, for our own as well
1 Pet. 2. 13 as for the Lords ſake (*o*). And whoever ſpeaks otherwiſe, inciting men to caſt off this yoke from their necks: they are properly ſtiled children of *Belial*, their helliſh deſign is clean contrary to the Text, to cauſe diviſions and offences amongſt you.

2. As it is neceſſary to prevent diviſions that you ſubmit to the ſame Government ſo that you walk by the ſame rule; What is that? It is either Principal or Subordinate. Principal, even the Law and the Teſtimony, the ſacred Scriptures: Subordinate, even according to the Scriptures, the rules, and canons, and Cuſtomes of the Church, without a due reſpect to both theſe rules in their right places, it is impoſſible Chriſtians ſhould ſpeak all the ſame things, but there will be diviſions among them. I dare aſſert, and think it not difficult to maintain by the Scriptures, as well as clear reaſon, that there is an obligation upon the members of that Church in which they were born, baptiſed and bred up, to ſubmit unto, and obey the rules, and canons, and cuſtomes thereof,

thereof, if they be not able to prove them contrary to the Scriptures, or the clear light of natural reason in us, or at least such conclusions as are properly, directly, and evidently deduced from them. There is much in that argument of the Apostle to confirm the sober-minded herein. (p) *If any man be contentious, we have no such custome, neither the Churches of God*: And in that of our Saviour: *If the Offender will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an Heathen and a Publican*; and again, *he that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Do not think I ascribe to the Church any Popish infallibility, or call for any blind obedience unto it. O no, if any of its rules or injunctions, appears to be contrary to the Word of God, like *Nebuchadnezzar's* to the three Children, to fall down to his Image; or *Darius* his to *Daniel*, not to pray to any other God; or the High-Priests to the Apostles, not to speak in the name of Jesus, then must we answer with them; *whether must we obey God or man, judge ye.* But then we must not deny our obedience to such Church rules and canons, as repugnant to God's Word upon light surmises,

(p) 1 Cor. 11.

and

and ſlender preſumptions; this *were to ſpeak evil of the things we know not* (q). O no, (r) as in the Courts of Civil Juſtice, men are not ordinarily put to prove themſelves honeſt men, but the proof lieth on their accuſers part, and therefore it is ſufficient for the acquitting any man *in foro externo*, that there is nothing of moment proved againſt him: it being requiſite to the condemning a man that there be a clear and a full evidence againſt him. So in theſe moral trials, when enquiry is made into the lawfulneſs or ſinfulneſs of our Churches rules and cuſtomes, and our Governours commands, it is ſufficient to warrant them, if there can be nothing produced from expreſs Scriptures or ſound reaſon againſt them; and to condemn or diſobey them upon remote conſequences and weak deductions, though it be from Scripture-Texts, can ne'r be excuſed of raſhneſs and unrighteouſneſs. Sure obedience is an unqueſtioned duty, *obey them that have the rule over you* (ſaith the Apoſtle) for they watch for your Souls, and therefore unleſs it be manifeſt, that their Lawes and injunctions be againſt the Word of God, all our queſtions are but carpings, and needleſs ſtumbling blocks, laid in our way by

(q) Jude 10.

(r) *As I take it, this is the excellent Biſhop Sanderſon in one of his Sermons,* No worſe for that.

by the Troublers of *Israel.* The safest way is obedience, which also is absolutely necessary among Christians, that they may speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among them. Then,

3. More particularly still to this end, that as Christian Brethren ye may speak the same things without divisions, it is necessary that ye all joyn in the same form of prayer, praise, and manner of worshipping God. It was *David's* earnest desire, *O magnifie the Lord with me, and let us exalt his Name together:* And the Holy Ghost in the *Acts* mentions this Uniformity in the Churches Infancy, and time of her first love, to be one chief cause of its prospering and inlarging, *Acts* 4. 24. The multitude of Believers lifted up their voice in praises with one accord. *The people with one accord gave heed to the things that* Philip *spake:* And its a great part of the blessedness of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, that the Elders sing with one voice unto the Lord. So doth the Apostle make it his earnest prayer for the *Romans*, that they might be like minded one towards another, that with one mind, and with one voice, they might glorifie God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: with

Psal. 34.3.

Acts 4 24.

Acts 8.6.

Rev. 4.10.

Rom. 15.6.

one mind, and with one mouth too; while men think to glorifie God in ſeveral ways, and ſeveral forms, it is ſcarce intelligible, how they can do it in this deſirable manner, with one mind, and with one mouth: ſo many ſeveral ways, ſo many ſeveral mouths; and that can never tend to the glory of God. The Apoſtles expreſſion intimates, that like-mindedneſs, unanimity, and uniformity, are very ſubſervient to the glory of God: What an honour is it to the God of *Iſrael*, when all *Iſrael* came in as one man to do him worſhip; when that admirable variety of Gifts and Adminiſtrations and Offices that are in his Church do not jar and claſh one againſt another, but ſuſtain and mutually ſupply out of their ſtores the wants each of other, and all conſpire together in their ſeveral kinds to glorifie God: What elſe is muſical harmony but concord in diſcourſe, variety in conſort? it makes the muſick full and delightful, when there is a well-ordered variety of voices and inſtruments in it: but if all inſtruments were perfectly well tuned, yet if the men could not agree what to play, but one would have a nimble Galliard, another a friſking Jig, another a grave Air;

Air; and if all of them should be so wilful, as without yielding to the rest, to scrape on his Tune as loud as he could, what a hideous hateful noise may you imagine would such a mess of Musick be? no less odious to God, and equally grievous to every godly man it is, when such Vices as these are heard in the Church of God, *I am of* Paul, *and I of* Cephas, *and* 1 Cor. 1. 12
I of Apollo: When one Pamphleteer will have the Church governed after this fashion, another after that; when one Mountebank in Religion will have this way of Worship, and form of Prayer, another that, to the great scandal of the Reformed Religion, and the manifest dishonour of God. Surely beloved, such an Uniformity, as of all Christian Members of the same Church to be of one mind, and worship God in one place, and in one way, and form, and manner, with one accord, would be the most beautiful, and comely, and happiest thing in the world. So is this Uniformity in actions of Worship also necessarily included in this Apostolical Exhortation, to speak the same things, and that there be no divisions amongst us.

Indeed this would be a perfect and blest-

ſed Unity for all theſe three to meet together; unity in judgment, unanimity of loving affection, and uniformity in action, and this perfection ought to be both in all our aims and endeavours: but if while we faithfully endeavour it in our ſeveral places, we cannot (through our own weakneſs, or others waywardneſs) attain to the full perfection hereof, yet *pulchrum erit in ſecundis tertiis ve*, it will be our comfort and commendation to labour and attain ſo much after it as poſſibly we can; and therefore *nevertheleſs whereunto we have attained, let us mind the ſame things.* Let us labour after this unity of judgment, affection, and action. I beſeech you Brethren by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there be no diviſions amongſt you, but that ye ſtrive perfectly to be joyned together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgment.

Phil 3.16.

To quicken you hereunto (this being ſo needful a duty, and we all ſo dull unto it) let me offer theſe following forceable Motives to your ſerious conſideration.

1. The ſeaſonableneſs of the Exhortation: for are not theſe the laſt and worſt days, the dregs and Lees of times, of which

which our Saviour prophecied, when Christian Love should grow cold, which is the Bond of Peace; and Satan knowing his time but short, should double his diligence in sowing his Tares of cursed contentions in Gods Fold, the proud and malicious hearts of men being too fruitful soils thereof; and of which the Apostle propheseth, and Saint *Jude*. Read the places, and see if the men of this Age be not therein exactly described. Alas, when was the Christian World ever more out of quiet? when was Gods Church ever more dangerously rent and torn? when was Schismes and Separations ever more greedily and dangerously made and prosecuted? when was Gods Church on Earth more Militant, or had more Enemies? forreign, abroad, intestine, at home? more Satanical spirits to hate it? more *Lucians* to scoff at it? more *Rabshekah*'s to rail on it? or *Balaam*'s to curse it? when were there more Atheists to scoff at Religion, (*Ridemur decathimmur*, saith *Tert.*) more Hereticks to reproach, revile, and slander it? more Schismaticks studying divisions, affecting parties, carrying up-sides and factions, (and being out of danger of the Kings Laws, and

Heb. 10. 24, 25. Jude v. 11.

contemning the Churches pious Edicts and Cenſures) like unnatural Children rending and tearing their Mothers Bowels? (*Inimici Domeſtici*.) Behold the Churches Foes are thoſe of her own Family, her Sons diſturb her peace, and the
Rom. 3. 17. way thereof they will not know. Miſtake me not, my deſign is not to rail, or reflect on any ſort of men, but only to warn you as a faithful Watchman to take heed of theſe deceitful ways: and the very deſign of this Complaint and Lamentation, that there ſhould be ſuch Troublers of *Iſrael* abounding amongſt us, is only to ſhew the Exhortation in the Text as neceſſary; ſo ſeaſonable, even that we all hearken after the things that make for peace: to ſpeak the ſame things, and to avoid (if it be poſſible) theſe diviſions amongſt us. So from the ſeaſonableneſs, paſs we

2. To the reaſonableneſs of the Exhortation alſo, and that in almoſt infinite reſpects.

1. Liſten to Gods Commands: ſearch the Scriptures Brethren, and find any duty, if you can, more peremptorily commanded, more highly commended by the Holy Ghoſt, more frequently preſſed by the

the Prophets and Apoſtles than this. How often doth the Goſpel of Peace call upon us, to follow peace with all men, if it be poſſible, and as much as lyeth in us to live peaceably with all men? How much more with Brethren, men of the ſame Nation, and Church, and Faith, and Religion with our ſelves? for to ſuch it is written, Be of one mind, live in peace, follow Righteouſneſs, Faith, Charity, and Peace; with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It were endleſs to give you all the ſtrict Commands of the Goſpel to this purpoſe, without obedience to which we are not real but nominal ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt, unleſs we ſtudy Unity, and be careful to maintain peace and love, and ſpeak the ſame things, and avoid diviſions, and thoſe that cauſe them, the World may queſtion our Chriſtianity; which will further appear in all the following conſiderations: whilſt we look upon God, whom we pretend to ſerve and worſhip.

Eph. 5. 16. Heb. 12. 14. 2 Cor. 13. 11. 2 Cor. 13. 14. 2 Tim. 2. 23.

2. It is the Apoſtles Argument amongſt many others: *I the Priſoner of the Lord beſeech you, that you walk worthy of the Calling wherewith ye are called.* How? *With all lowlineſs, and meekneſs, and long-*

Eph. 4. 1, 2.

ſuffering, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: For, ſaith he, *there is one Body, one Spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one God, and Father of all.* There is but one God, and great reaſon then we ſhould endeavour unity, and unanimity, and uniformity in the worſhip and ſervice of this one God. Thoſe that have ſeveral Gods, may well have ſeveral ways, and ſeveral forms to worſhip them; as the Marriners in *Jonah* called every one upon his God. When ſeveral Gods are afoot, all Games muſt go forward; but now we all profeſs but one God, unchangeably one, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and he is always of one mind, he is not for one thing ſometimes, and another thing other times, like a diſtempered Stomack, but God is ſtill of one and the ſame mind; and therefore that which pleaſeth him at one time, the ſame words and things, if they proceed from the ſame heart, muſt needs find the ſame acceptance always. No marvel if diſſentions ariſe amongſt wicked ones, betwixt *Abimelech* and the men of *Shechem*, ſeeing they ſerve divers Maſters, have ſeveral luſts, one raigning in this, another in that man, all commanding

manding contrary things; but shall not Christians speak the same things without divisions, that all serve one Lord, and that one being so far from commanding any thing that may occasion discord, that his very livery is the Badge and Cognizance of Love and Peace. More particularly, being we profess to worship the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, let us consider each Person in the Blessed Trinity.

1. God the Father he is one, there is one Father of all: If God be our Father, then are we all Brethren to each other. If a man coming into his Neighbours house by chance, should find them all together by the ears, would he not think them disorderly and ill-governed children? how much more if they should be observed to be ever and anon snarling and quarrelling one with another, and beating and kicking one another. Here *Joseph* thought he need say no more to his Brethren to prevent their falling out by the way, than to remind them that they were all one mans Children, and Brethren to each other: And *Abraham* to procure an everlasting Amity, and utter cessation of all Debates, thenceforth between himself, and his Nephew *Lot*, and their

Livery

Eph. 4. 6.

Gen. 45. 24

their Servants, made uſe of this one Argument, the moſt prevalent of all others, that they were Brethren. *Ecce quam bonum*; Behold how good and joyful a thing it is Brethren to dwell together in unity. Prophane *Eſau* durſt not avenge himſelf on *Jacob*, leſt he ſhould vex his Father *Iſaac*: And ſhall not Chriſtians then who are Brethren, not only by Generation, but by Regeneration, much more tender the diſpleaſing of their one Father, by diſagreements and moleſtations of one another? the nearer, the dearer, we uſe to ſay, and there are few Relations nearer than that of Brotherhood, but no Brotherhood in the world ſo cloſely and ſurely knit together, and with ſo many and ſtrong tyes, as the Fraternity of Chriſtians in the Communion of Saints, which is the Brotherhood in the Text: And therefore as we are Brethren, and tender the glory of that God who is the Father of us all, it concerns us to ſpeak the ſame things, and that there be no diviſions amongſt us.

Gen. 13. 8. Pſa. 133. 1. Gen. 27. 4.

2. Conſider alſo God the Son; we are all redeemed by that one price of his precious Blood, and methinks that calls for love and unity. It's implied in that of the

the Apoſtle, *One Faith*: One Faith is fixed on one and the ſame object, the Mercy of God, and Merits of Chriſt, or Gods Free Grace in Chriſt, and being ingrafted into one and the ſame Vine, ſhould we not all bear one and the ſame fruit? We are all Fellow-Captives redeemed by the ſame Saviour, Fellow-Patients cured by the ſame Phyſitian, even Jeſus Chriſt the object of our Faith. Hence he that redeemed us did in like manner pray for us, that we may be one, perfectly one, that the world might know that God ſent him: but this can never be, if we ſpeak not the ſame things, but there be diviſions amongſt us. Eph 4.5. John 17. 21,23.

3. There is alſo but one Spirit, and that's the Apoſtles Argument alſo: *There is one Body, one Spirit*; and therefore endeavour the unity of the Spirit. The Spirit is a Spirit of Unity: this Spirit is the very Eſſential Unity, Love and Love-knot of the two Perſons, the Father and the Son, of God with God; yea, it was the very Union and Love-knot of the two Natures in Chriſt, of God and Man: he is the Spirit of Unity, and therefore cannot delight in us, unleſs we keep the unity of the Spirit: That Spirit, the Soul of Eph. 4.

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man,

man, that gives life to the natural body, yet can it not animate and give life to members diſmembred, unleſs they be firſt united and compact together. We read
Ezek. 35. 7,8,9. there of the dead and ſcattered bones, that to the end they might be revived, they firſt came together, every bone to his bone, then the ſinews came and knit them, then the fleſh and skin covered them; and then, and not before, the Spirit came from the four Winds to give them life. So the very natural Spirit, the Soul, doth not inform the body, unleſs there be an accord and unity in it: much more is this required as a proper diſpoſition to make us meet for the habitation of the Holy Ghoſt, even this quality that is like that his Nature and Eſſence, Unity and Unanimity, for us to be of one mind and judgment, and to ſpeak the ſame things, and that there be no diviſions amongſt us: diviſions are a token we are led by divers Spirits, and not by this one. There is a Spirit indeed in theſe diviſions, but it is an evil ſpirit, ſuch as was be-
Judges 9. tween *Abimelech* and the men of *Shechem*: And ſuch as are for a toleration of ſuch diviſions, we may write upon them as our Saviour did upon the man poſſeſſed, *Le-*

gion,

gion, for they are many: pretend they to the Spirit as they will, of walking and praying by the Spirit, we need not believe them, unless we list, to be led by any other than a devillish spirit. The Devil shews himself to be a Devil by his Cloven Foot: if we would receive, and not grieve, nor quench, nor dishonour the one Spirit, by which we pretend all to be governed, let us speak the same things, that there be no divisions amongst us: As we tender the glory of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we must do this.

3. So while we look upon the Church of God, for that is but one body, which is the Apostles argument also: *It is but one, and only one. My Love, my Dove, my undefiled is one, she is the only one of her Mother.* So are we Christians made all up into σύσωμα, one mystical body; and that by such a real (though mysterious) incorporation, as that we become thereby ὁ καθεῖς, as all of us members of Christ, so every one of us members one of another: Not the sympathy and supply that is between the members of the natural body, for their mutual comfort and good of the whole: The Apostle setteth it forth

Eph. 4. Cant. 6.

Eph. 3. 6.

Rom. 12. 5.

forth elegantly, and applieth it very fully
1 Cor. 12. to the Myſtical Body of the Church at large. It were a thing prodigiouſly unnatural, and to every mans apprehenſion the effect of a frenzy or madneſs at the leaſt, to ſee the head plot againſt, the tongue revile, the hands buffet, the teeth devour his fellow-members. No, if any one member, be it never ſo ſmall and deſpicable, be in anguiſh, the reſt are ſenſible of it: There is a mutual ſympathy and communication betwixt them; there are no terms of bitterneſs ſtood upon in the natural members, I am better than thou, and I than thou; no terms of diſgrace heard, (I have no need of thee, nor I of thee) but they are all ready to contribute their ſeveral ſupplies according to their ſeveral meaſures and abilities, to give eaſe and relief to the grieved part, ἵνα μὴ ᾖ σχίσμα.
1 Cor. 12. 25. *That there be no rent or ſchiſm*, ſaith the Apoſtle, uſing the very word of the Text, no diviſion or diſunion of parts in the body: And as we may conſider the Church as one Body, ſo as one Houſhold, and our ſelves as fellow-ſervants of the
Gal. 6. 10. ſame Family, the ſame houſhold of Faith: So ought we then to behave our ſelves in
1 Tim. 3. 15. the Houſe of God, which is the Church of the

the Living God, as becometh fellow-servants that live under the same Master: We all wear one Livery, having all put on Christ by solemn profession at our holy Baptism; and we are all fed at one Table, eating the same spiritual meat, and drinking the same spiritual drink in the holy Communion; and therefore all reason, that as members of the same Body, and servants of the same Family, we speak the same things, and there be no divisions amongst us. Mr. *Baxter* in his Cure of Divisions, urgeth two or three things well in this Topick of the Church, as that our union with the Church, is a sign of our proportionable union with Christ; and our separation from the Church, is a sign of our separation from Christ; nay, that union is not only an accident, but of the very Essence of the Church, without which it is no Church, and without which we can be no members of it, Unity being necessary to the very being of the Church, and of Christianity; and that our union is necessary to our nourishment from, and Communion with Christ and his Church: but I refer you for these to him, whom perhaps some will rather hear than us, if we should speak the same words. I shall amongst

1 Cor. 10. 3, 4.

See it page 66.

amongſt many particulars urge only four things, with reference to the Church, that ſhews the need you have to ſpeak the ſame things, and that there be no diviſions amongſt you.

1. This is the only way to forward the work of God for the building up of the Church; which Faction and diviſions on the other hand obſtructeth, ſo as nothing more. You often read in Scripture, of edifying the Body of Chriſt, and of doing all things to edifilcation The expreſſion is metaphorical, taken from material buildings, often uſed by the Apoſtle with application to the Church of God, and the ſpiritual building thereof: for the Church is the Houſe of the Living God; and all Chriſtian-members of this Church are as ſo many ſtones of this building, whereof the houſe is made up: and the bringing in unbelievers into the Church, by converting them to the Chriſtian Faith, is as the fetching of more ſtones from the Quarries to be laid in the building. Now the building in it ſelf (and that is edification) is the well and orderly joyning together of Chriſtian men as living ſtones in truth and love, that they ſpeak the ſame things, and that there be no diviſions

Eph. 4. 12. 2 Cor. 12. 19.

1 Tim. 3. 15.

ſions amongſt them, that they may grow together, as it were, into one entire building, to make up a ſtrong and comely houſe for the Maſters uſe and honour. (*a*) Indeed there is nothing more conduceth hereunto than Peace, Love, and Concord: Knowledge is very little or nothing but a puff in compariſon of Charity, in order to Edification: (*b*) It may ſwell, and look big, and make a ſhew, but Charity doth the deed: (*c*) It lays the ſtones together, and makes them couch cloſe one to another, and binds them up with Fillings and Cement to make them hold. Hence that wiſe Maſter-builder S. *Paul*, that knew well what belongs to this work, when he ſpeaks of compacting the Church into a building, mentions the edifying of it ſelf in love. (*d*) Indeed when all the Workmen intend the main buſineſs, each in his place and office performing their appointed task with chearfulneſs and good agreement, then doth the work go on, and the building gets up apace and ſtrongly; but when one man draws one way, and another another way, one will have things done after this faſhion, another after that, one mars what another makes, pulls down what

a 1 Pet. 2. 9.

b 1 Cor. 8. 1

c 1 Cor. 1. 10.

d Eph. 4. 16.

another ſets up, how is it poſſible while things go thus, that ever the building ſhould be brought to any perfection or handſomneſs? and therefore well doth the Apoſtle joyn theſe two together, τὰ τῆς εἰρήνης καὶ τὰ τῆς οἰκοδομῆς. (e) *Let us follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith we may edifie one another.* Where the hearts and tongues of the builders are divided, the building will either come to nothing, or prove but a *Babel* of confuſion: for where envy and ſtrife is, there is confuſion, and every evil work. (f) Strife will make ill work, it will build up nothing, unleſs it be *Babel's* walls: It is peace and concord that builds up the walls of *Jeruſalem*, which as it hath its name from peace, ſo hath it alſo its perfection from peace; and then, and not before, ſhall *Jeruſalem* be built, as a City that is at unity in it ſelf; (g) when they that build *Jeruſalem* are firſt at unity amongſt themſelves, when they ſpeak the ſame things, and there is no diviſions amongſt them.

e Rom. 14. 19.

f James 3 16.

g Pſa 122. 3

2. As this is the way to build the Church, ſo it is the way to preſerve it both in peace, beauty, and ſafety.

1. In peace. The concord of Familie

is their peace, ſo is amity and concord in the Church; whereas the diviſions and diſcords of Chriſtians diſturbs their minds, and diſcompoſeth the Church: *Pray for the peace of* Jeruſalem, (*h*) ſaith the Pſalmiſt; but by different forms and ways there is a breach of that peace: ſuch diviſions in the Church are like wars and tumults in the Commonwealth, they diſcompoſe, and ſet it out of order. It was Sir *Henry Wotton*'s excellent ſaying, *Diſputandi pruritus Scabies Eccleſiæ*: The Itch of Diſputing doth cauſe the Scab of the Church. Every Sect finds ſome little pleaſure in ſcratching, by zealous wranglings and diſputes for their ſeveral Opinions, till the blood be ready to follow; and at length it proves the bain of peace, and charity, and love, which is the very life and ſoul of Chriſtian Religion: Now is not this, or ſhould it not be an effectual Motive to this Unity, Unanimity, and Uniformity? How dear ſhould be the Churches peace to every member thereof? *Dulce nomen pacis*, the very name of peace ſounds ſweetly to the ear: there is ſuch a mixture of pleaſantneſs and profitableneſs in it, as wrapt the Pſalmiſt into admiration, *ut prius miraretur quàm oſtende-*

h Pſa. 125.

ret, he admires it himſelf, and rouzeth o-
i Pſa. 133. 1 thers to the like admiration: (*i*) *Behold how good and pleaſant a thing it is, Brethren to dwell together in unity*: ſome things are pleaſing, not good, as Epicuriſm and Good-fellowſhip; ſome things good, not pleaſing, as Faſting and Martyrdom, but this both; for pleaſure, it is like the Oyl poured out on *Aaron*'s Head; for goodneſs, it is like the Dew on *Hermon*'s Hill, which made the Valleys fruitful. So good and pleaſant it is, that nothing can be pleaſant without it: It is the deſire of all hearts, the reſt of all Nations, the end of all Contentions, *pacem te poſcimus omnes*, nothing more deſirable in Families, in Kingdoms, much more in the Church: And therefore leſt we violate the Churches peace, it concerns us to ſpeak the ſame things, leſt there be no peace but diviſions amongſt us.

2. It is the way to preſerve the Church in beauty and honour; the concord of Chriſtians is their beauty and honour, and their diviſions and diſcord is their deformity and ſhame. The Church ſtands upon two Staves, the Staff of Beauty, and the Staff of Bands: if the Staff of Bands be once broken, the Staff of Beauty cannot

not long ſtand, but by diviſions our Beauty becomes deformity, Reformation deformation: as when one hand is black, and another white, one cheek pale, another red: ſo whilſt we become ſeveral Churches, ſeveral Bodies, what do we but make a Monſter of the Church, the Body of Chriſt! Indeed nothing more tends to the Churches diſhonour, and Chriſts diſhonour, than this: there is no ſuch ſcandal to the Churches Enemies of all ſorts, than this: the common Enemies of the truth of Religion, are chiefly Atheiſm and Superſtition; and wherefore ſerveth the home-differences of Chriſtians, eſpecially about indifferent things, about Geſtures, and Veſtures, and other indifferent Rites and Formalities, that for ſuch things as theſe, (things in their own nature indifferent, and never intended to be otherwiſe impoſed, than as matters of circumſtances and order) men ſhould deſert their Miniſterial Charges, fly out of the Church as out of *Babylon*, ſtand at open Defiance againſt lawful Authority, and ſharpen their tongues and pens with ſo much petulancy and virulency as ſome have done; wherefore ſerveth this, but to the diſhonour of Chriſtians

and Christianity, and to give scandal to the Enemies thereof?

1. To the Athiest: for he, till all men be of one Religion, and agreed in every point thereof too, (which I doubt will never be whilst the World lasteth) thinketh it the best wisdom to be of none, nay, makes it his best pastime to jeer at all: The agreement of Christians is an ocular demonstration to the World, that they have a certainty of the Faith which they profess, and that it is of a healing nature, and tendeth to the felicity of the world: so that never was Christians observed to live in an undivided Unity and unfained love, but the very Infidels and ungodly round about them did reverence both them and their Religion for it; whereas their discords and divisions give occasion to Atheists and Unbelievers to blaspheme, as if there were no certainty in their belief, or as if it were of a vexatious and destructive tendency: so that never were Christians divided, implacable, and bitter against each other, but it made them and their profession a scorn to the unbelieving and ungodly World. Their despising and vilifying one the other, teaches the wicked to despise and vilifie them all: as a well ordered

ordered Army, and a City of uniform; and comely building is a pleasing and inviting sight to beholders, whereas a confused Rabble and ruinous heap breeds abhorrence; even so the very sight of the concordant society of Christians, is amiable to those without; whereas their disagreements and separations makes them odious. Hence the former conduceth much to the conversion and salvation of men, and the latter hardens men in wickedness, and hinders their coming into the Church, and their obedience to the truth. Who loveth to thrust himself into a fray? and what wise men will joyn with drunken men that are fighting in the streets? A more effectual way cannot be devised to drive men from Christ, than to represent Christians like a company of madmen that are tearing out the throats of one another: when one Faction flies upon, and speaks ill of one another, what wonder if the Atheist and Infidel speak ill of, and flies further from them all? whereas contrarily, the best means to win the World to a love of Holiness, is, if they can see that holiness makes men fervent and unfeigned in the love one of another. (*k*) Christs words in his prayer

k 1 Pet. 1. 22.

l John 17. 20, 21, 22, 23. are notable to this purpoſe: (*l*) *I pray*, ſaith he, *for them that ſhall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one: As thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they alſo may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou haſt ſent me*, &c. It plainly implies, that the Unity of Chriſtians is a great means of converting the World to the Chriſtian Faith, and convincing Infidels of the truth of Chriſt, as ſent by God: and ſo on the contrary, their diviſions muſt needs be a ſcandal to them. Upon which account alſo, we have reaſon to take heed, to ſpeak the ſame things, and that there be no diviſions amongſt us.

2. Such diviſions give ſcandal to Papiſts. You read how loth was *Abraham* to fall out with *Lot*, and how deſirous he was to compound the differences that were between their Herdmen; and one reaſon is hinted, in that it is ſaid, (*m*) the *Canaanites* and *Perizzites* dwelt at that time in the Land. So have we in our Land many *Canaanites* and *Perizzites* at this day, that take offence at theſe diviſions of ours, and makes it a chief occaſion to alienate their hearts from the Truth of God. There be many Papiſts and Romaniſts

m Gen. 13. 7.

nists confirmed and made obstinate in their Opinion of the Catholickness of the Romish Faith. Hereby, when they hear of so many things which have been ever, and are still retained in the Church of *England* in common with the Church of *Rome*, as they were transmitted both to them and us in a continued Line of Succession from our Godly and Orthodox Forefathers, who lived in the Ages next to Christ and his Apostles, to be now inveighed against, and decryed as Popish and Superstitious. And when they see men, pretenders to Piety, Purity, and Reformation, more than others, not contenting themselves with those just Exceptions that had been formerly taken by the Church of *England*, and her regular children, against some Erronious Doctrines and Forms of Worship taught and practised in the Church of *Rome*, and endeavoured to be unduly, and by her sole Authority, imposed upon other Churches, when they see them not contenting themselves with these things, but even so far transported with a spirit of contradiction, as that they care not, so as they may but run far enough from *Rome*, whether, or how far they run, although they

should

ſhould run themſelves (as too oft they they do) quite beyond the bounds of Truth, Allegiance, common Reaſon, and even common Humanity alſo. Beſides, we know it hath been, and is one grand objection of the Papiſts againſt the Reformed Churches, that the Fanatical diſſentions amongſt our ſelves are evident ſigns of an Heretical ſpirit, as *Bellarmine*, *Stapleton*, *Kelliſon*, and others argue; and *Fitz Simon*, an Iriſh Jeſuite, hath written a whole Volumn on this argument, which he calls *Britanio-Machia*. It's true how unhappy they have prov'd in this pretended Unity, which they make a note of their true Church, any one may judge that will but read the writings of Doctor *Field*, Biſhop *Jewel*, and even the late Book of the Excellent Doctor *Stillingfleet* upon this argument, which proves them nevertheleſs faulty, however we be blame-worthy: As *Gregory Nazianzen* did anſwer thoſe in his time that uſed the ſame argument, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐδὲν ἧττον ἀσεβεῖτε κὰν ἡμεῖς ἁμαρτάνομεν; onely by this me-thinks we ſhould be warn'd, if by no other conſideration, to let ſuch a ſpirit of peace and meekneſs ſhew it ſelf in our lives and doctrines, *ut nihil de nobis male loqui*

Diſcourſe concerning the Idolatry practiſed in the Church of *Rome*, by *D. Edw. Stillingfleet.*

loqui ſine mendacio poſſint, that they may never have advantage with the ſame breath to ſpeak both truly, and reproachfully againſt us. And to this end, to preſerve the Churches beauty and honour, and to ſtop the mouth of the Adverſary, and take away the occaſion of ſcandal, let us ſpeak the ſame things, and let there be no diviſions amongſt us. I add,

3. This want of Unity, Unanimity, and Uniformity among thoſe that keep within the pale of the Church, gives ſcandal to thoſe of the Separation, ſuch Schiſmaticks and Hereticks as are clean gone out, and have renounced all kind of communion with us; for they muſt needs think very jollily of themſelves and their own ſingular way, when they ſhall find thoſe very grounds whereon they have raiſed their Schiſm to be ſo ſtoutly pleaded for, and purſued by ſome that are yet content to hold a kind of communion with us: For there are many that will hold thoſe Principles, beſides which there can be nothing colourably pretended for inconformity in point of Ceremony and Church-Government, that will not yet admit of ſuch concluſions naturally iſſuing thence, as will neceſſary in-

See Toleration not to be abuſed.

force

force an utter ſeparation. The *Separatiſts* Tenents are but the *Nonconformiſts* Principles improved, and then it is to be feared that the *Nonconformiſt* gives the occaſion of offence and boaſting to the *Separatiſt*, he lays the foundation for the others diviſion from us, and ſo may happily have a right in that of our Saviour,

n Mat. 18. 7 (*n*) *Offences will be*, (for the tryal of the faith and patience of the Saints) *but* væ homini, *woe to the men* (without repentance) *by whom the occaſion of thoſe offences comes*. In all theſe reſpects then, for the Churches honour, and to avoid that ſcandal that is thereby given to Atheiſt, Papiſt, and Separatiſt, let us ſpeak the ſame things, and let there be no diviſions amongſt us: and as for the Churches beauty and honour, ſo

3. For the ſafety thereof; for diviſions

1. Invite and incourage the Churches Enemies.

2. They weaken them to reſiſt them.

1. They invite and incourage the Enemy, as it is noted of the Ancient *Brittains*, their inteſtine contentions invited the Enemy to conqueſt. Nothing ſo much heartneth and advantageth the Enemy abroad, as the fractions and diſſentions that

We

we have at home: *Per diſcordias civiles externi attollunt animas*, ſaid *Livy* once of old *Rome*. Whence our Countryman *Gildas* complained of old of this Iſland then imbroiled in wars, *fortis ad civilia bella, infirma ad retundenda hoſtium tela*, that by how much more her valour and ſtrength was ſpent upon her ſelf in managing of inteſtine and domeſtick broils, by ſo much the more ſhe laid her ſelf open to the outrages and incurſions of forreign Enemies: *commune periculum concordiâ propulſandum*, ſaith *Tacitus*. The Churches peace and concord is the Tower of *David*, from whence we may repel our Adverſaries, whom elſe we ſhall by our inteſtine differences cauſe to rejoyce. If all the members of the Church were but faſt joyned together, ſaith Dr. *Reynolds*, † *vinculo fidei & glutine charitatis*, in the bond and cement of Faith and Love; if Governours, Teachers, and People, would but joyn hand in hand, the one to rule with Authority and Meekneſs, the other to teach with wiſdom and compaſſion, the third to honour, both by humble ſubmiſſion to their judgment, and willing obedience to the guidance of their Governours and Paſtors, then would they cut off

† In his excellent Sermon of the peace of the Church.

off all occaſion from thoſe that ſeek occaſion, and diſappoint the expectations of thoſe that do, *captare tempora impacata & inquieta*, would be fiſhing in troubled waters. The Devil (as *Optatus* ſpeaks) is tormented with the peace of Brethren, but is quicken'd and put into hopes of ſucceſs in his attempts againſt the Church by the mutual ruptures and jealouſies, that the members thereof foment and cheriſh amongſt themſelves; as when by *Jeroboam*'s defection *Judah* and *Iſrael* were rent aſunder, then came *Shiſhak* and troubled *Jeruſalem*: (*o*) and as diviſions invite and incourage the Churches Enemies, ſo

(*o*) 2 Chro. 12. 2.

2. They weaken her to reſiſt them. The unity of Chriſtians is their ſecondary ſtrength, ſaith Mr. *Baxter*; their primary ſtrength is Chriſt, and the Spirit of Grace which quickneth them; and their ſecondary ſtrength is their union amongſt themſelves. Separation from Chriſt depriveth men of the firſt, and ſeparation one from another depriveth them of the ſecond: evermore *vis unita fortior*; but diviſions weaken the Church, and diviſers are certainly the weakners and deſtroyers of the Church: even Satan is

ſenſible

ſenſible that his Kingdom divided cannot ſtand, and therefore he keeps an admirable unity in the members thereof; ſo that a whole Legion, conſiſting of many thouſands of them, had but one name, one action, and one habitation in the man poſſeſſed with them: *Concordiâ res parvæ creſcunt, diſcordiâ dilabuntur*; the wall is hollow and looſe where the ſtones ſtand off one from another, and couch not cloſe: Now brotherly love and unity is it that bindeth all faſt, and makes of looſe heaps one entire piece. Obſerve the expreſſion in the Text; *I beſeech you Brethren*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *that there be no diviſions amongſt you, but that ye be perfectly joyned together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgment.* Like-mindedneſs, you ſee, is the thing that joyneth all together, and in the well joyning conſiſteth the ſtrength of any ſtructure: Whence we read of *the bond of peace*, (*p*) and *the bond of perfectneſs*: (*q*) An expreſſion of the like importance you have, (*r*) *That I may hear of your affairs*, ſaith he, *that ye ſtand faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind.* Chriſtians never ſtand ſo faſt as when they are of one mind: whence there is a Greek word ſometimes uſed in the

p Eph. 4. 3.
q Col. 3. 14
r Phil. 1. 27

the New Teſtament, as Biſhop *Saunderſon* obſerves, (ſ) *viz.* ἀκαταςασία, which is commonly tranſlated Confuſion, and ſometimes Tumults; neither of which Tranſlations are unfit for the ſenſe; but in the Literal Notation it rather imports, a kind of unſtableneſs or unſettledneſs, when a thing doth not ſtand faſt, but ſhaketh and tottereth, and is in danger of falling. And this S. *Paul* oppoſeth to peace; *God is not the Author*, ſaith he, ἀκαταςασίας *of confuſion, but of peace.* Intimating by the very oppoſition, that it is moſtly for want of peace that things do not ſtand faſt, but are ready to fall into diſcords and confuſion. S. *James* ſpeaks out what S. *Paul* but intimateth, and tells us plainly, that this ἀκαταςασία is the effect of diſcord, and that contention is the Mother of Confuſion; for where envying and ſtrife is, ſaith he, there is ἀκαταςασία unconſtancy, unſettledneſs, confuſion, and every evil work. The Builders do but make ill work where the building is not like to ſtand, but threatneth ruine, and is ready to drop down again by that time it be well up: yet ſuch ill work doth envying and ſtrife ever make; it is concord and union only that maketh good work,

(ſ) Biſhop *Saunderſon's* Sermons, p. 270.

work, and buildeth ſtrong. Let *Jeruſalem* be built as a City at unity in it ſelf: (*a*) and *Jeruſalem* is like to ſtand the faſter and longer for it; like *Seleucus* his bundle of Sticks, *inſuperabiles dum inſeperalis*, they could not be broken, inſuperable while inſeparable; ſuch is a Church, a Land, a Corporation, while it is at unity: But O how weak is it when it is divided? like thoſe Rods pulled aſunder out of the bundle, which the weakeſt Child could ſnap aſunder? is not this ſo in all other things? An Army is ſtronger than a man, a Kingdom than a Singie Perſon; a Flame burns more ſtrongly than a ſingle Spark; the Waves of the Ocean are more forceable than a ſingle drop; a three-fold Cord is not eaſily broken. Hence weak Commonwealths ſeek to ſtrengthen themſelves by Confederacies with other Sates. Alas Brethren, many are our ſpiritual and temporal Enemies; and ſtrong is the League of Impiety that we are to encounter with in this world; our moſt united Forces, and joynt endeavours, are all little enough againſt them: Aud can a few ſingle ſtraglers hope for Victory, when whole Troops of *Moab*, *Ammon*, and Mount *Seir*, are to encounter

(*a*) Pſa. 122. 3

counter them? Shall *Brittains* ſtill retain that folly whereof *Tacitus* of old branded them, *dum ſinguli pugnant univerſi vincuntur*, whilſt they reſiſted ſingly, they were overcome univerſally? being divided they were deſtroyed. Thus it was with the Kingdom, and thus it will be with the Church, if we do not ſpeak the ſame things, but there be, and continue to be diviſions amongſt us By ſeveral ways, and ſeveral forms, we make the Church a very *Babel* of Confuſion, and if *Babels* confuſion go before, *Babels* deſtruction will follow after: Dividers are certainly *Abaddons*, Deſtroyers, deſtroyers of the Church, what good ſoever they pretend: * As thoſe means which beſt corroborate the body, and fortifie the ſpirits, do beſt cure many particular diſeaſes, which no means would cure while Nature is debilitated; ſo are the Church Diſeaſes beſt cured by uniting fortifying remedies, which will be encreaſed by a dividing way of Reformation: dividing is wounding; and uniting is the cloſing of the wound. It's Satans uſual way to pretend to a good work, when he purpoſeth to deſtroy it; he reſiſteth Light as an Angel of Light; he will be a zealous Reformer,

* Mr. *Baxter's* cure.

Reformer, when he would hinder Reformation; and it is Satans mark of Reformation: he doth it by dividing the Church of Chriſt, and teaching Chriſtians to avoid each other; and he deſtroyeth their love to one another, by pretending love to themſelves, as if he would have them but to avoid ſin and Church-corruptions: and in this dividing work the Devil doth as Make-bates uſe to do, that firſt goes to one man, and tell him what ſuch an one ſaid againſt him, and what a dangerous perſon he is; and then go to another, and ſaith as much of the firſt to him. So the Devil zealouſly aggravates the faults of every party to others, that they may have odious thoughts of one another, and ſo as they love their Souls avoid them. So this dividing Spirit juſt gives ſuch counſel to men for the preſervation of their Souls; as if a man ſhould thus, in pretended kindneſs, counſel a man for the preſervation of his health, and bodily comfort. O take heed of that Mouth, and that Belly, for it getteth nothing, but devours all that the hands do get by labour; or caſt off that hand, for it hath a crooked finger; or that gouty foot, that it may not trouble the whole body; or rip up thoſe guts

which have ſuch filthy excrements in them; is not ſuch kindneſs to be ſuſpected? * Behold the Devils wiles and ſtratagems, be wiſe, and avoid them, I beſeech you; and therefore for the Churches peace, and beauty, and honour, and ſafety, be exhorted to labour after unity, unanimity, and uniformity, to ſpeak the ſame things, and that there be no diviſions amongſt you. Theſe are the third ſort of Motives while you look upon the Church of God: But

* Thus far Mr. *Baxter.*

4. Though ye ſhould have little regard either to God, or the Church of God, yet look upon your ſelves, even in point of wiſdom, and out of ſelf-love; it concerns Chriſtians, every one in his place, to labour to ſpeak the ſame things with other Chriſtians, and to avoid diviſions from them.

1. For your own ſafeties ſake; for if the whole be in danger, ſo is every part. Hence the Marriners called upon *Jonah*, *What meaneſt thou, O ſleeper, ariſe, call upon thy God*; as if they had ſaid, if the whole Ship be loſt, ſo will every Soul in it, and thou amongſt the reſt. Perhaps ſome may think their own ſafety obligeth them to be dividers, to hold up a Faction

and

and Diviſion, or at leaſt not to meddle in their Stations towards the healing them: but to ſuch I ſay as *Mordecai* did to *Eſther*, *Think not thou alone ſhall eſcape, if thou hold thy peace:* O no, O no, deliverance may ariſe another way, but thou and thy Fathers houſe ſhall be deſtroyed; therefore if you have reſpect for your own ſafety labour for peace, and unity, and unanimity, and uniformity with your Brethren, that you ſpeak, *&c.*

2. For your own peace alſo; for this is one way for Chriſtians to attain a peace with God, and man, and themſelves. The Apoſtle ſpeaks of ſome (*b*) that pleaſe not God, but are contrary to all men: I think it may be ſaid of Dividers, Authors, or Fomenters of diviſion, they cannot pleaſe God, while they ſtudy how to be contrary to all men. I ſhall not need, ſaith Dr. *Reynolds* in his Sermon of the Peace of the Church, to load them with any other guilt than the Apoſtle doth, that they are not the ſervants of Chriſt: (*c*) For how can he who is without peace and love, ſerve or pleaſe that God who is the God of Peace, and whoſe Name is Love, and whoſe Law is Love? *Non habent Dei charitatem qui non diligunt Ec-*

b 1 Theſ. 2. 15.

c Rom. 15. 17.

(d) A known Place it is *lib 3. ch. 16 de baptiſm*

cleſiæ unitatem, ſaith S. *Auſtin*; (d) nor need I to diſmiſs them with a more fearful Curſe than that of the Apoſtle too, *I would they were even cut off that troubles you.* The *Achans*, the Troublers of *Iſrael*, muſt expect trouble and no peace from the God of *Iſrael*, nor can ſuch have any peace in themſelves for being given to change, they are but like *Noahs* Dove fluttering from place to place, having no reſt for the ſoles of their feet, till they return to the Ark again: They are like children toſſed to and fro with every wind of Doctrine, and even when they think themſelves fixed, they moſt-what ſtill have ſome jealouſies remaining in their minds, that poſſibly they are deceived; ſo that they ſeldom have any reſt, unleſs they come at laſt to a hardneſs of of heart, and a ſtupid and benumming in ſenſual ſecurity, crying Peace where there is no Peace; for no true peace, no true reſt is to be had, till they come to this ſpeaking the ſame things, without diviſion, from their Brethren; How often do we ſee them like drunken men reeling to and fro, carried from this to that extreme, till they come at laſt to conclude in Atheiſm and Infidelity? whereas by being

They are but like *Cain*, as fled from the place of reſt, ſo dwelling in the Land of *Nod i.e.* of wandring *Vid.* Dr. *Stillingfleet's Sherinah in locum.*

ing united, particular Christians would be strengthened in the truth, having nothing more to do, but to grow in Grace, and make Progress from degrees to degrees in Holiness, which is the very design of Christianity. Indeed

3. It concerns every one to labour after this Unity, if they do but consider that this alone will put them in a fit posture to receive the blessing of God. It is remarkable, the Psalmist (*e*) exhorts the people, *Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which stand in the House of the Lord.* Mark, he exhorts them plurally, *Ye, and all ye, bless ye*; but in the third verse he prays to God to bless the people singularly; *The Lord bless thee out of* Sion: *Plures hortatur ut benedicant, ipse, uni benedicit*, saith S. *Austin*; He exhorts all to bless the Lord, but he blesseth all from the Lord as one man. It hints, that then God useth to bless his people, when they are at unity as one man. So Christ came to his Disciples with a blessing when they were a rowing together; (*f*) and to his Apostles with a blessing of Peace when they were assembled together; (*g*) and he sent his Holy Ghost to them when with one accord

(*e*) Psa 134.

(*f*) Mat 14.

(*g*) John 20. 19.

cord they were met together: And ſo the Promiſe runs, *Where two or three is met together in my Name, there am I in the midſt of them.* While Chriſtians diſagree in their manner of ſerving, and bleſſing, and worſhipping God, God will not bleſs them, as He will do, if in one way, and with one mouth and heart they glorifie their Father: if they ſpeak the ſame things, and there be no diviſions amongſt them: if he will hear the prayers of Chriſtians when two or three are united together, how much more when ſeveral thouſands? nay, not only all in a Congregation, but all in all Congregations throughout a whole Land are united, ſpeaking and asking the ſame things. In this caſe, ſure if in any, *the Kingdom of Heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent taketh it by force*: On the contrary, if there be diviſions, we can never be ſo hopeful in our prayers, for theſe diviſions moſt-what cauſeth alienation of affections, and ſo we cannot pray with ſuch hopes of Audience, becauſe we cannot then lift up pure hands without wrath: the clamour of our boiling malice to each other, will out-cry our prayers; our diſſentions will make that ſweet Incenſe

cenſe ſtink in Gods Noſtrils, and will turn our Prayers into Curſes, if we do not ſpeak the ſame things, but there be diviſions amongſt us.

Many more Motives I might heap up to inforce our Exhortation, eſpecially that drawn from the many examples we have ſet before us; as that of God the Father, who being provoked by us, yet by all means ſeeks peace and union with us; hath ſent his Miniſters of Reconciliation to beſeech us to be reconciled unto him, loadeth us with his bleſſings, cauſeth his Sun to ſhine, and his Rain to fall on us, and all to induce us to be at peace with himſelf: And can we be partakers of the Divine Nature, or Sons of our Heavenly Father, if we be not Followers of him, as dear Children, in endeavouring to be united one with another? Nay, Chriſt his Son did become Incarnate to unite us to God, and make our peace with God; yea, and loe, the Prince of Peace came to dwell amongſt men for this end, when peace was amongſt men in *Auguſtus*'s days, when there was general quiet and union through all the World, and at his Birth the Angels proclaimed peace on Earth,

good

good will towards men. O how then can we be Diſciples of Chriſt, and not follow after peace, to ſpeak the ſame things, and that there be no diviſions amongſt us? yea, and this Oyl of Charity poured on Chriſt the Head, did run down to the Beard, yea, unto the skirts of all his garments; for all the Saints of God now in heaven have gone thither in this way of peace: *Abraham* ſaid to *Lot*, *Let there be no contentions amongſt us, for we are Brethren*; *Stephen* prayed for his Perſecutors, *Father, forgive them.* The Saints were ever peace-makers, and not peace-diſturbers, or dividers: Nay, very wicked men and Devils are ſenſible of the benefit of this way of union one with another; therefore did *Ephraim* and *Manaſſeh* agree together againſt *Judah*, *Herod* and *Pilate*, *Scribes* and *Phariſees* againſt Chriſt: Nay, very bruit beaſts covet an union, *ſævis inter ſe convenit urſis*: and ſhall we be more blockiſh than they? In a word, God ſtiles himſelf the God of Peace, Chriſt the Prince of Peace; his Name is *Immanuel*, a Name of Peace, was Crowned at his Baptiſm with a Dove, the Emblem of Peace, being in the building of the Church ὡς κεφαλὴν γωνίας a Corner-ſtone,

ſtone, the place of Peace, coming into the World with a Song of Peace, and going out of the World with a Legacy of Peace. The Spirit the Bond of Peace, the Goſpel the Covenant of Peace, and the word of Reconciliation, Miniſters Ambaſſadours thereof, *Jeruſalem* the type of the Church, ſignifies in the Hebrew Tongue the Viſion of Peace; and the bliſs in Heaven we all look for, is nothing elſe but Eternal Peace, where we ſhall all ſpeak the ſame things without diviſion to the glory and praiſe of God: If then we be Sons of the God of Peace, Servants of the Prince of Peace, Temples of the Spirit of Peace, Profeſſors of the Goſpel of Peace, if we have any Conſolations in the Miniſters the Ambaſſadours of Peace, if we be Citizens of *Jeruſalem* the Viſion of Peace, and hope to be gathered to our Fathers, to enjoy an eternal Sabbath of Peace: if there be in us any conſolation in Chriſt, any comfort of love, any fellowſhip of the Spirit, let it be our care to walk by this Rule of Peace, Unity, Unanimity, and Uniformity with our Brethren, to ſpeak the ſame things, and that there be no diviſions amongſt us; but let us be perfectly joyned together in

the ſame mind, and the ſame judgment; and as many as walk according to this Rule, peace be upon them, and the whole *Iſrael* of God.

Now that you may ſee how Chriſtians are to ſpeak the ſame things, and how they may and muſt order their endeavours to avoid diviſions, give me leave to cloſe my Exhortation with ſundry Directions picked out of the Analogy of Faith: The skilful Phyſitian muſt not only diſcover the diſeaſe, and perſwade his Patient to uſe all means to prevent and remedy it, but he muſt alſo direct him what remedies to uſe, and how to uſe them. The directions I ſhall give you, you cannot like the worſe, becauſe moſt of them, I confeſs, I have (though in a different method) out of that excellent Sermon of Doctor *Edward Reynolds* of the Peace of the Church, to which I have added ſome Heads, and ſome inlargements; better I could not find, let him do it that can, ſuch wholeſome Rules being therein offered, as would compoſe the moſt turbulent ſpirits to ſome moderation, if they would walk up to them; and joyntly conſidered, exceedingly conducing to heal the breaches of the Church of God.

Then

Then by way of caution, that you mi- *Direct.* 1.
ſtake me not, know, that though you muſt ſpeak the ſame things, and avoid diviſions, and labour to be of the ſame mind and judgment, yet this Exhortation admits of a limitation, it muſt be only, if it be poſſible, and as much as lieth in you, without any ſhipwrack of truth and holineſs: For howſoever Unity, Unanimity, and Uniformity be well pleaſing unto God, yet is it not ſuch an Unity as he deſireth, unleſs it be truth and peace together; ſuch a peace and unity as is according to truth and godlineſs in Chriſt Jeſus: there may be an agreement together *in falſo*, when men hold together for the maintenance of one and the ſame common errour. Such as is an agreement, as our Learned *Davenant* (*g*) obſerves.

g Epiſt. de pacificat.

1. Of Hereticks, in caſe of Hereſies, when Adverſaries ſpeak all the ſame things, to deny or deprave the Faith of the Goſpel, as *Hymenius* and *Philetus* did, (*h*) who ſought to overthrow mens Faith in the Reſurrection.

h 2 Tim. 2. 18.

2. Of Idolaters, in caſe of Idolatry; (*i*) if *Iſrael* play the Harlot, let not *Judah* tranſgreſs, for τὶς συγκατάθεσις what agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? (*k*)

i Hoſ. 4. 15.

k 2 Cor. 6. 16.

3. There

3. There may be an agreement of Uſurpers, in caſe of Tyranny, when any ſhall uſurp and exerciſe Domination over the Conſciences of men, to bring them into bondage unto Doctrines of Errors, and make Articles of Faith for all Churches to ſubmit unto, as the *Romiſh* Church, and eſpecially as the *Tridentine* Councel have done. In which caſe the Apoſtle had no patience to give place by ſubjection to them, no not for one hour.* *Neque enim quiſquam noſtrum Epiſcopum ſe eſſe Epiſcoporum conſtituit, aut Tyrannico terrore ad obſequendi neceſſitatem collegas ſuos adegit*, ſaith S. *Cyprian* in the Councel of *Carthage*, in the caſe of Rebaptization (*m*). Yea, 2. There may be an agreement *in malo*, when men combine together in a Confederacy for the compaſſing of ſome miſchievous deſign, as did thoſe forty and odd that bound themſelves with a Curſe to deſtroy *Paul* (*n*): ſuch as is the agreement of Thieves, Cheats, Drunkards, Whoremongers, and Fornicaters, and Rebels, among themſelves: ſuch agreements as theſe no Chriſtian ought to joyn with, or be of the ſame mind or judgment with them: The wiſdom of the Fleſh, and cunning of the Devil,

*Gal 2.4,5

m Lib. de ſentent. Epiſcop. de hæretic. rebapt.

n Acts 23. 12,13.

Devil, will bring men fast enough to those cursed agreements, without which he and his knows well enough, his Kingdom cannot stand. Gods Servants have rather evermore bent themselves by their prayers and endeavours, to dissolve the Glue, and break these Confederacies of the ungodly. *Destroy their tongues, O Lord, divide them,* was holy *David's* prayer (*o*). And S. *Paul*, when he stood before the *Sanedrim* at *Jerusalem*, to take off his malicious Accusers the better, perceiving both the Judges and by standers to be of two different Factions, some *Pharisees* who believed a Resurrection, and others *Sadducees* that denied it, he did wisely to cast a bone amongst them (*p*). In this case then the Rule is certain, that though we must labour for Unity, yet are we ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι, as S. *Jude* speaks, (*q*) to contend earnestly for the great things of the Law and Gospel, those that are either Foundations themselves, or are most visibly and immediately adjacent and contiguous to the Foundation. Hence *Paul* and *Barnabas* had no small dissention and disputation with the false Brethren, that taught the necessity of Judaical Rites unto Salvation: (*r*) And *Athanasius* the

o Psa. 55. 9.

p Acts 23. 6, 7, 10.

q Verse 3.

r Acts 15. 2.

Great

Great would not have the Orthodox Brethren to receive τύπον ἐιρήνικον any Forms, or Letters, Communications, or Pacificatories, from *George* the *Arrian* Persecutor: (*f*) And *Basil* the Great (*t*) giveth an excellent reason of it, ἐπεὶδὰν γὰρ τὴν ἁπλότητα τῆς πίστεως ἅπαξ παραχαράξωμεν ἐκέτι πέρας τῶν λόγων εὑρήσομεν: If once (saith he) we shake the simplicity of the Faith, and retain not that as a Rule and Measure of Inferiour Differences, Disputes and Contentions will prove endless; therefore the Unity that must be laboured after, and maintained amongst Christians in the Church, must be a Christian Unity, that is, a happy Concord, in walking together in the same path of truth and godliness. The Word of Christ is the Word of Truth (*u*); and the Mystery of Christ is the Mystery of Godliness (*w*); and Christ that is the King of *Salem*, is the King of Righteousness also (*x*): Whatsoever then is contrary to these, Truth, or Godliness, or Righteousness, cannot be acceptable unto Christ (*y*): The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable; and our Unity must be the Unity of the Spirit: (*z*) *Ea enim sola Ecclesiæ pax est quæ Christi pax est*, saith *Hilary*.

(*f*) Aust. Epist. 130. & opt. lib 2.

(*t*) Epist. 324. ad Epiph.

(*u*) Col. 1.5.

(*w*) 1 Tim. 3.16.

(*x*) Heb. 7.2.

(*y*) James 3. 17.

(*z*) Eph. 4.3.

Here

Here are our bounds ſet us, our *nè plus ultra*, beyond which if we paſs we tranſgreſs, and are exorbitant, *uſque ad aras*: The Altar-ſtone is the mear ſtone; all Bonds of Friendſhip, all Offices of Neighbourhood muſt give way, when the Honour of God and his Truth lies at ſtake: we muſt buy the Truth, and not ſell it for any temporal advantages: The Church is Militant, and muſt maintain Wars with Principalities, and Powers, and Spiritual Wickedneſſes: and Chriſt came to ſend a Sword upon Earth againſt all dangerous Errours of mind and manners. If peace will be had upon fair terms, or indeed upon any terms (*Salvis veritate & pietate*) without impeachment of truth and piety, it ought to be imbraced; but if it will not come upon harder conditions, better let it go. A man may buy Gold too dear: *Follow peace with all men, and holineſs*, ſaith S. *Paul*, (*a*) *without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord*; not without which peace, but without which holineſs, no man can ſee the Lord: for the Gender of the Pronoun is not Feminine, not οἷς χωρὶς, but ὁ χωρὶς: without peace ſome man may ſee the Lord, having faithfully endeavoured it, though he can-

(*a*) Heb. 12. 14.

not obtain it, (for that is not his fault) but without holiness (which if any man want, it is his own fault only) no man shall see the Lord: Our speaking the same things then, and being joyned together in the same mind and judgment, must have this limitation, so far forth as may stand with Christian truth and godliness. Now for positive directions: To this then joyn in the second place.

Direct. 2. That so the main of truth and godliness be but preserved inviolate, then must Christians, by all means, seek Unity, Unanimity, and Uniformity, to speak the same things. It's true the Heathen said truly, that *nihil minimum in Religione*, yet we know our Saviour distinguisheth between *Mint* and *Cummin*, (*b*) and the great things of the Law. And the Apostolical Synod at *Jerusalem*, (*c*) between things necessary and unnecessary; and S. *Paul* (*d*) between meats and drinks, and the Kingdom of God; and elsewhere between the Foundation and Superstructure. (*e*) Some truths there are which belong *ad fidem Catholicam*, others which only pertain *ad scientiam Theologicam*: Some are *quæstiones πίστεως*, saith *Gregory Nazianzen*, others *λεγόμενα*: some are *de fide*,

b Mat. 23. 23.

c Acts 25. 28.

d Rom. 14. 1.

e 1 Cor. 3. 10, 11.

fide, others *circa fidem*, being such perillous superinducements as may bruise and wrench the foundation, others *præter fidem, in quibus salvâ fide quâ Christiani sumus, ignoratur verum*, as S. *Austin* speaks (*f*), in which we may err or be ignorant, believe or suspend without any hazard to the common Faith. In one word, as *Tertullian* distinguisheth of sins, so may we of opinions; some are *quotidianæ incursionis*, such as are usually incident to humane frailty, and some are *dogmata devoratoria salutis*, such as proceed from heretical pride, or blindness. Now though we must, as I said before, contend earnestly for the Faith, the Foundations themselves, (against Heresies, Idolatry, or Tyranny) or such points as are immediately adjacent to the Foundations, yet so long as there is found agreement in Fundamental Truths, and in the simplicity of the Gospel, we must deny our own wits, and silence our disputes, in matters meerly notional, or Canons that have little or no necessary influence into Faith, or godly living, speaking the same things with our Brethren in those matters, rather than spend our precious hours in impertinent contentions: so as for gain of a

(*f*) De peccato Originis, cap 23

ſmall truth, to ſhipwrack a great deal of love, and by perplexing our minds with leſs matters, take off our thoughts from more neceſſary and ſpiritual imployments. It was a wiſe and ſeaſonable rebuke which the Marriners in a dangerous Tempeſt gave to a Philoſopher, who troubled them with an impertinent diſcourſe, ἡμεῖς ἀπολλύμεθα σὺ δὲ παίζεις, we periſh whilſt thou trifleſt: So is it ſad that it can be truly ſaid of any, that (whilſt they ſo wrangle about ſuch queſtions as gender ſtrife, thoſe, whoſe poor ſouls, ready happily to ſink under the Tempeſt of Sin and Death) cry out like the Man of *Macedonia* in S. *Pauls* Viſion, *Come and help us*; do for want of the plain and compendiary way of Faith, Repentance, Good Works, Spiritual Worſhip, and Evangelical Obedience, which ſhould be taught them, become a prey to the envious man, who while we ſleep will be ſure to watch, and goes about ſeeking whom he may devour. O that we would be wiſe then, by all means to preſerve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and in nothing to give offence to the Church of God, but rather ſilence and ſmother our *domeſtica judicia*, our private judgments, and ſingular

gular fancies and conceits, leaving all small dissentions to *Elias*, *quum venerit*; as the *Areopagites* did some causes to the hundred year (*g*), being stiff and peremptory in none of these things against the quiet of Gods Church, but speaking the same things, even such things that may make men confess that God is in us of a truth. *In absoluto ac facili est æternitas*, saith S. *Hilary* excellently, God leadeth not his people unto life eternal by knots and inextricable questions, by verbal wranglings or contentions: *Curiositate opus non est*, we have no need of Curiosity, saith *Tertul.* Our work is to be Christians in practice, not Criticks in doubtful Disputations. We do but mistake the design of Christianity, if we fix our selves in perplexed conceits and humours; nay, we pervert it, if we raise and pursue contentions in the Church, saith Mr. *Hildersham* (*h*): This is a mark of ungodly and graceless men, such as serve not the Lord Jesus, but their own bellies (*i*). It agrees this with S. *Judes* description of Seducers in his time (*k*): On the contrary, every man that fears God, his great care is to love God, and keep his Commandments (*l*): But as for

g A Gell. p. 12. c. 7.

h Upon John 4. 23.

i Rom. 16. 17, 18.

k Verses 8, 11, 12.

l 1 John 5. 2.

ſmall truth, to ſhipwrack a great deal of love, and by perplexing our minds with leſs matters, take off our thoughts from more neceſſary and ſpiritual imployments. It was a wiſe and ſeaſonable rebuke which the Marriners in a dangerous Tempeſt gave to a Philoſopher, who troubled them with an impertinent diſcourſe, ἡμεῖς ἀπολλύμεθα σὺ δὲ παίζεις, we periſh whilſt thou trifleſt: So is it ſad that it can be truly ſaid of any, that (whilſt they ſo wrangle about ſuch queſtions as gender ſtrife, thoſe, whoſe poor ſouls, ready happily to ſink under the Tempeſt of Sin and Death) cry out like the Man of *Macedonia* in S. *Pauls* Viſion, *Come and help us*; do for want of the plain and compendiary way of Faith, Repentance, Good Works, Spiritual Worſhip, and Evangelical Obedience, which ſhould be taught them, become a prey to the envious man, who while we ſleep will be ſure to watch, and goes about ſeeking whom he may devour. O that we would be wiſe then, by all means to preſerve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and in nothing to give offence to the Church of God, but rather ſilence and ſmother our *domeſtica judicia*, our private judgments, and ſingular

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g A Gell. p. 12. c. 7.

h Up n John 4. 23.

i Rom. 16. 17, 18.

k Verses 8, 11, 12.

l 1 John 5. 2.

doubtful things, he is of a peaceable diſpoſition in them, he is of the number of them that are quiet in the Land (*m*): He ſpends not the heat of his zeal about, for, or againſt doubtful Opinions, alterable Modes, Rites, and circumſtances of Religion, they are things too weak to lay much weight upon them, being ſo little ſerviceable or diſſerviceable to the very deſign and frame of Chriſtianity, further than as our humility, and obedience, and meekneſs, and other Chriſtian Graces, are exerciſed and manifeſted by them: Indeed an eager defending or oppoſing ſuch kind of things, is† (to uſe the ſimilitude of an excellent Perſon) like the Apes blowing at the Gloworm, which affords neither light nor heat: nay, by woful experience we find it very injurious to the very deſign of Chriſtianity, as that which often hardens Atheiſtically diſpoſed perſons, when they obſerve the contentions of Chriſtians about matters of this nature, for thereby they often take a meaſure of their whole Religion; and beſides an eager concernedneſs about indifferent things, is too ordinarily accompanied with a luke-warm, or rather frozen indifferencies concerning the moſt important points, and the

m Pſal. 35. 20.

† The deſign of Chriſtianity by M. *Fowler*.

the Indispensables of Christianity. It is too visibly apparent to be denied (saith Mr. *Fowler*) that those that have such a scalding hot Zeal either for, or against things of no certainty, and no necessity, are many of them (as their Predecessors the *Pharisees* were) in the very other Extreme, as to not a few of the weightiest matters of Religion: wherefore in these things I beseech you, so as Fundamentals of Faith and Godliness be but preserved inviolate, let us speak the same things, and let there be no divisions amongst us. To this end Page 24.

3. Let our great care be an ὑπακοὴ and ὁμόνοια, a joynt obedience to the truth wherein we all agree, and pursuance of those pious ends we all profess. It's the Apostles Rule, this in the very case; (*n*) *whereunto we have already attained*, saith he, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same things; for this we must know, that the love of God, and Conscience of his Commandments, is the right way to know him, and the secrets of his Word. *Si in Christi lumine ambulare volumus, à præceptis ejus & monitis non recedamus*, saith S. *Cypr.* If any man will do the will of God, he shall know the Do- n Phil. 3. 16.

o John 7. 17. ctrine, ſaith Chriſt (*o*), *Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments*, ſaith S. *John* (*p*). Thoſe things which we learn to do, we learn by doing, ſaith *Ariſtotle*. *Niſi fidelium operum uſus præceſſerit doctrinæ cognitio non apprehendetur*, ſaith S. *Hilary* (*q*). The right knowledge of Divine Truth is not only intellectual for the Brain, but experimental for the Conſcience, and conſiſteth much in the taſte of ſpiritual things. *Quod in cibis guſtus, in ſacris intellectus*, ſaith S. *Baſil*. *Video multos parvo ingenio, literis nullis, ut bene agerent peragendo conſecutos*, ſaith *Pliny* (*r*). Hence that expreſſion of the Apoſtle, (*ſ*) *Knowledge according to Godlineſs*: They therefore that reſolve to make it their daily care to keep a good Conſcience, are moſt likely by the other helps of Learning and Induſtry, to find out the truths wherein Chriſtians are apt to diſagree: for the very Heathen Philoſopher † *Ariſtotle* could ſay, κακία φθαρτικὴ ἀρχῶν, wickedneſs putrifies the principles of the mind, and that ſuch as are mens courſes of life, ſuch are likewiſe the diſpoſitions of their minds towards practical truths: A corrupt heart uſually makes a corrupt judgment. *Dum*

p John 1. 2,3,4.

q Pſa. 118.

r *Lib.* 6. *p.* 29.

ſ 1 Tim. 6. 3

† N3.

lis

his quæ volumus doctrinam coaptamus, let us not then be like Painters that can draw a Ship on a Table, but can build none for use; such as can write a discourse of Doctrines in Papers, but not express it in our lives; but by an unanimous obedience to the truths we know, let us dispose ourselves for the discovery of those we know not; that's one good way to bring us to speak the same things, and to prevent divisions amongst us.

4. To this joynt obedience in things wherein we all agree, let us add a moderation of the fervour of our zeal, against those that are contrary-minded in the things wherein we differ. There is in the nature of many men a certain θερμότης, an heat and activeness of spirit, which then principally, when conversant about objects Divine, and matters of Conscience, is wonderful apt, without a due corrective of wisdom and knowledge, to break forth into intemperate carriage to disturb peace, and occasion divisions. It was zeal in the Woman which persecuted S. *Paul*, (*t*) and zeal in him too, which persecuted Christ before he knew him (*u*). If Devotion be blind, and not ruled by Knowledge, and if Zeal be like Quick-

t Acts 13. 50.

u Phil. 3. 6. Acts 26. 9.

silver

ſilver not allayed, nor reduced to uſefulneſs by wiſdom and mature Learning, it often proves the occaſion of much unquiet in the Church: Through this zeal, Truth it ſelf is often ſtretched too far, and by a vehement diſlike of Errour on the one ſide, men often run into an Errour of the other, As *Dionyſius Alexandrinus* being too fervent againſt *Sabellius* laid the grounds of *Arrianiſm*: And S. *Chryſoſtom* is obſerved, in zeal againſt the *Maniches*, to have too much extolled the Power of Nature: And *Acoſta* obſerves of S. *Jerom*, that *ardore feriendi adverſarias premit interdum ſocios.* So are there many who out of a hatred of the Papiſts, run into other extremes of Enthuſiaſm or Prophaneneſs: Yea, by this miſguided zeal it is, that men do ſometimes marvellouſly alienate the minds of one another from peace, by loading the contrary Doctrines with envious conſequences, which the Conſciences of the Adverſaries do abhor: which courſe uſually tend to Exacerbation, whereby Truth never gaineth ſo much as Charity and Peace do loſe. It's true, Acrimony and ſharpneſs of rebuke is ſometimes neceſſary, towards men of obſtinate and pernicious

Vide Dod. Holdſworth's *Lect.* 40. *p.* 350.

pernicious minds (*y*); but amongst Brethren, yea Adversaries that are not incorrigible, all things ought to be carried with lenity and meekness (*z*), and with a mutual συγκατάβασις or condescention to one anothers weaknesses (*a*). *Sepis monsus non nocet*, (Epiphanius Heres. 36.) *vespa quò acriùs pungit minus lædit.* He observes, that there be some Creatures, that the more they sting, the less they hurt: And so in any dispute, that man doth less hurt with his Argument, that betakes himself to biting and intemperate Language. In these things then we should carry our selves, (saith Doctor *Reynolds*, *non* ἀλλοτρίως *sed* ἀδελφικῶς,) as Brethren, not as Enemies, not to uncover the nakedness of our Brethren. But as it is said of *Athanasius* the Great, *dissidentibus magnis*, by his meekness he drew those that dissented from him; so should we (if it be possible) make the truth a gainer by our mild handling of them that vary from us. Christ himself did devest himself of his Glory and Majesty, to condescend to our vileness, and bear with our infirmities; so should we imitate the example of our Master, according to that grave advice of *Nazianzen* ἡττηθῶμεν ἵνα νι-

y Titus 1. 13. Gal. 2. 5.

z Gal. 6. 1. & 5. 13. 2 Tim. 2. 15.

a Rom. 15. 1.

κήσωμεν

κήσωμεν; let us yield to our Brethren that we may overcome them, as a Flint is eaſily broken upon a Pillow that yields to it.

b 1 Cor. 10 14. (*b*) Let no man ſeek his own, but every man anothers weal; even as I pleaſe all men in all things, ſaith the Apoſtle, not ſeeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be ſaved. Patience and condeſcention, ſo far as we can lawfully, is the true Uniter and Peace-maker

c Prov. 15. 1. (*c*): The ſoft anſwer breaketh wrath, but croſs and thwarting language and practiſe rather ſtrengthens it: The haſty Spirit begins the fray, ſaith Biſhop *Saunderſon*, the patient ſpirit muſt end it, if it ever be ended, that we may all ſpeak the ſame things, and that there may be no diviſions amongſt us. I know your Miniſter cannot ſay theſe things, but ſome will ſay, he is far from practiſing what he teacheth: but I pray be not ſo raſh in cenſuring, ſo to hinder your ſelves of the benefit of theſe wholeſome directions; it is his care to uſe the Rod, and the Spirit of Meekneſs, both in their due places, and if he miſtake through weakneſs, do you pity and pray for him, and do your own parts the more carefully.

5. To this end alſo, and to moderate

our

our zeal, according to the fourth direction, be we cloathed with Humility: Our knowledge is apt to beget Pride, and Pride is the Mother of Contention: Only by Pride cometh Contention, ſaith Solomon; *He that is of a proud ſpirit ſtirreth up ſtrife* (*d*). Yea, it is the Mother of Hereſies, whereas Humility is the chief breeder and preſerver of Unity. Hence the Apoſtle, when he exhorts to unity and love, he tells us firſt, that we muſt with all meekneſs, and holineſs, and long-ſuffering, forbear one another, or elſe we can never keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace (*e*): And when he exhorts (*f*) to be of one accord, and one mind, he tells us, (*g*) that if we would do ſo, we muſt in lowlineſs of mind eſteem each other better than our ſelves: As the juice of the ſame Earth is ſweet in the Grape, but bitter in Wormwood; as the ſame Odour is a refreſhment to the Dove, but a Poyſon to the *Scarabæus* or Beetle, ſo the ſame Learning and Knowledge, qualified with Charity and Humility, is admirable uſeful to edifie the Church, which with pride and contempt of others is moſt miſchievous and dangerous. Ever therefore let

lowlineſs

d Prov 28. 25.

e Eph. 4. 2, 3.

f Phil. 2. 2.

g Verſe 3.

us

us be careful to correct and keep down the riſing of our knowledge by humility, not cenſuring or deſpiſing one another. Pride made the *Donatiſts* to forſake the Catholick Unity, which S. *Cyprian* (in the ſame judgment, but with more humility) did not diſturb. Humility in weak ones would make them docible and tractable, if they were but ſenſible of their own blindneſs in the things of God, they would lay aſide their private conceits, and not rack the Scriptures, to ſay ſomething for them (as *Demoſthenes* ſaid of the Oracle, that it did φιλιππίζειν) but they would then reſign up their judgments to the light of Gods Word, and clear Reaſon, and when their errours are diſcovered, hold their peace. And humility in ſtrong ones would make them far from cenſuring their Brethren, would put them in the form of ſervants, and cloath them with φιλαδελφία, Brotherly Love, which is *magnus perſuadendi artifex*, a very great means to work on others judgments, to take off all ſuch impediments as uſually riſe from perſonal prejudices in the diſquiſition of truth. When *Benhadad*'s ſervants obſerved the word (Brother) to come out of *Ahab*'s mouth,

1 Kin.

mouth, they haſtily laid hold on it, as an excellent preparation to ſettle thoſe differences which were betwixt thoſe two Princes (*h*). It was a good temper in *Calvin*, who profeſſed, that though *Luther* ſhould call him Devil, (for he knew his heat) yet would he ſtill acknowledge him for an excellent Servant of God. O that there were the ſame affections in us! Had we this humility, it would make the one condeſcend to the others weakneſs, and the other willing to learn any (though unwelcom) Truth, and unlearn any (though darling) errour, it would make them obey with duty what they are not able with reaſon to gainſay; and ſo we ſhould doubtleſs ſpeak the ſame things, and there would be no diviſions amongſt us.

h 1 Kings 20. 33.

6. As to this end we muſt moderate the fervour of our zeal with patience, and mutual condeſcentions, and humility, ſo muſt we ever ſet our zeal upon the right object, even upon our ſelves. † Cenſoriouſneſs of others, is a chief cauſe of diviſions and differences amongſt us. It was this that S. *Paul* diſcerned in the *Romans* (*i*), the weak were cenſorious of the ſtrong, and the ſtrong diſdained the weak;

† M.

i Rom. 14. 1. 10, 3.

weak; but neither of both did look into the other end of the Wallet, to examine throughly their own ſpirits. We uſe to ſay, if every one would mend one, all would be well: I, but there are many ready to mend, not only one, but ten, a thouſand, all about them: Every one would be mending one, but not the right one; his Brother, but not himſelf. O the falſeneſs and hypocriſie of mens hearts blinded with ſelf-love! Thus doth it fill the world with diviſions and offences: The diſeaſe is hypocriſie, as the Great Phytian ſhews (*i*); the ſymptoms are to be cat-eyed outward in readily eſpying ſomething in a Brothers eye, even the ſmalleſt † Moat, and to be Bat-eyed inward, in not perceiving a Beam in a mans own eye. And a third ſymptom is to be tampering with a Brothers eyes, and offering his ſervice, to help him out with a Moat there, before he think a thought of doing any thing towards the clearing of his own eyes. The remedy is to begin at home; if we put things in their right order, the buſineſs is done; *tu converſus confirma fratres*, ſtrengthen thy Brethren what thou canſt: Is is a good office, and muſt not be neglected, but ſomething more needful is firſt

i Luke 6. 41, 42.

† 13

first to be done, that thou mayest do that much better, be converted thy self first, be reformed first, τότε διαβλέψεις, (*k*) then shall thou see clearly to remove the Moat out of thy Brothers eye; be sure first thy self be converted, and then in Gods Name deal with thy weak Brother as thou seest cause, and strengthen him. O that those would consider this that are so forward to censure others, especially their Superiours! Magistrates and Ministers actions, ever and anon complaining, how ill things are carried by them, and yet never take notice of their own sins, frauds, oppressions, sacriledges, and insolencies, or prievishness, and other enormities. Let such turn their eyes homewards otherwhiles, observe how their own pulses beat, and go learn what that is. Thou Hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye. Believe it, we shall never grow to Christian unanimity in any tollerable measure, whilest this censorious spirit reigns in us, and while we do not chiefly imploy our care and endeavour in reforming our selves. This, I think, well practised, would conduce much to this speaking the same things, and the healing of divisions amongst us. So would it,

(*k*) Luke 6. 42.

7. If we would keep our ſelves in our own Stations, and labour to do God ſervice in the Places and Callings wherein he hath ſet us, and not ἀλλοτριοεπισκοπεῖν buſie our ſelves in other mens matters, which, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, are ἄμετρα unſuitable to us, and without our meaſure (*l*). By this one thing hath the Church of *Rome* cauſed a great Schiſm in the Chriſtian World, becauſe ſhe doth ὑπερεκτείνειν ſtretch her ſelf above her meaſure, and not content her ſelf with that degree which belongeth to her. It is excellent counſel of *Solomon*, not only in a caſe he there put, but in divers others: (*m*) If the Spirit of the Ruler riſe up againſt thee, leave not thy place. *E ſede itio*, may with a little heat turn into *ſed itio*, ſaith Doctor *Reynolds*. *Quidam in corpore Chriſti oculi quidem manus*, ſaith S. *Baſil*: All are not eyes and hands in the Body of Chriſt, to take upon them the burden of great affairs. Are all Apoſtles, ſaith S. *Paul*? are all Prophets? are all Teachers? hath not God dealt to every man a ſeveral meaſure? hath he not placed every man in a ſeveral order? have we not all work to do in our own places? muſt we needs rush into the labours, and intrude

l 2 Cor. 10. 13, 14.

m Eccl. 10. 4.

intrude our selves into the business of other men? *Hæc magistro relinquat* Aristoteli, *canere ipse docet.* It was a sharp rebuke of *Tully* against *Aristoxenus* the Musitian, who would needs turn Philosopher: whereunto agreeth the Answer of *Basil* the Great to the Clerk of the Emperours Kitchin, when he jeered him for his soundness against the Arrian Faction, σὸν ἔργον τῶν ῥωμῶν καρυκίας φροντίζειν. Your business, it is to look to the seasoning of your Broth, and not to revile the Doctrine or Doctrines of the Church. All these do commend the Apostles Exhortation unto you, let every one study to be quiet, to do his own business. * The Connexion more than intimates, the next way to be quiet abroad, is to be busie at home: We shall never learn well to be quiet, unless we learn also to keep our own business. The excellent Bishop *Lany* hath fully discovered, how guilty of the contrary hereof are both the Pope, the Covenanter, and Sectary, in his Sermon on this Text. † *Quietness is the natural and genuine effect of orderly keeping in our Callings, and Stations, and our own business.* For all discord must be between two, either persons, or parties; and that which commonly kin-

* 1 Thes. 4.11.

See Doct. *Lany*, Bishop of *Ely*, upon this Text. † N.

dles the Fire is envy, or ſome ſuppoſed injury. Now he that minds his own buſineſs only, can give no occaſion to others, of either envy or complaint; and ſo in recompence of keeping to his own buſineſs, he ſhall ſit quietly under his own Vine, and under his own Fig-tree. Let none of us then out of ambition, diſcontent, emulation, or any other Polipragmatical diſtemper, grow weary of our own imployments, and interpoſe our ſelves in things that are without, and above our order: But according to the Apoſtles rule, (*n*) Let every one abide in his calling, and keep the ſtation wherein God hath ſet him, and this will be an excellent help to our ſpeaking the ſame things, our unity, unanimity, and uniformity, and that there be no diviſions amongſt us.

(*n*) 1 Cor. 7. 24.

2. To this add alſo: Remember that σωφροσύνη injoyned by the Apoſtle (*o*), be wiſe unto ſobriety. When you are to deal with things divine, ſet bounds to your ſelves, that you break not through to gaze (*p*): think not to draw every thing in Religion to the rule of your own crooked preſumptuous Reaſon, to give a *quarrel* of every thing in Faith! Upon this

(*o*) Rom. 12.

(*p*) Exod. 19. 12-21.

this account it is that S. *Paul* charges the *Colossians* (*q*), to take heed of Philosophy, and vain deceits; not but that there is admirable use of sound Philosophy, and of Reason raised and rectified, so long as it is subordinate to Faith: but when Reason shall be so proud as to judge of Faith it self, and admit or reject it, as it shall be consonant or disagreeing to her prejudice, this is a Tyranny which will quickly overthrow all: Other cause than this there hath been none of the desperate Heresies wherewith the *Socinians* have pestered the World, but that they will have all truths to stand or fall at the Tribunal of their presumptuous Reason. Happy we, and the Church of God, if all curious Novelties in sacred things be esteemed prophane: Modesty becomes Christians, especially *cum de Deo agitur*, as *Seneca* said; be we wise to sobriety: This would confer much to our speaking the same things, and to take away divisions from amongst us; and of this advice the two next will be a full explication and improvement. So let that be the

q Col. 2. 8.

9. Ὑποτύπωσις πίστεως, keep your selves close to the form of sound words (*r*)

r Rom. 10. 6. 2 Tim. 1. 13.

Thoſe words and Doctrines which accord beſt with the grounds of Faith and love in Chriſt, thoſe which aſcribe moſt glory to God, and the Grace of God, and which moſt conduce to the humbling and abaſing of the pride of man, which moſt tends to the practice of godlineſs, to the purifying of Conſcience, and edifying of the Body of Chriſt. It is a weighty ſaying of S. *Auſtin* (ſ), *Non parum intereſt ad Chriſtianam pietatem quibus vocibus utamur*: It is of no little moment to Chriſtian Piety what words we uſe; they muſt be according to godlineſs (t), and our knowledge, the knowledge of the truth according to godlineſs. To which add

ſ De Civ. Dei lib. 10. c. 23.

t 1 Tim. 6. 3.

10. Συνήθεια, Be ſure to retain and bear reverence to the cuſtoms of the Church of God: *Contra fundatiſſimum morem nemo ſentiat* (n): † Let no man be in love with his private ſentiments, contrary to the Churches well-grounded Cuſtoms. *Nemo nobis moleſtias exhibeat ſic enim ſentit ac docèt Sancta Dei Eccleſia ab origine.* Epiphan. *in Anchorat.* Let no man trouble us in theſe things, for thus the Holy Church thought and taught from the beginning. *In quibus nihil certi ſtatuit Scriptura*

n Auſt. ep. 28.

† NB.

tura mos populi Dei & instituta majorum pro lege tenenda sunt, saith S. *Austin*; * Where the Word of God determines no certainty, and where there is no expres and evident variation from Divine Authority, there must be the Customs and received practices of the Ancient and pure Ages of the Church, and Constitutions of her Pastors, be retained as a Law, and to contemn and oppugn them, he somewhere calls it *insolentissima insania*, a most proud or insolent madness; only this Rule must be qualified with this necessary limitation, that no Authority hath any Authority in matters of Faith, Worship, or Doctrine of Religion, to prescribe or deliver any thing, as in it self, and immediately obligatory to Conscience, which is either contradicted or omitted in the Word of God; for that we believe to be fully sufficient to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good work (*x*); but as for matters accessary, of indifferency, order, decency, and inferiour nature, and in matters of testimony to the truths of Scripture, and for manifesting the succession, flourishing, and harmony of Doctrine, through all Ages of the Church, the godly Learned

* A known place.

x 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

Of Customs. hath ascribed much to the Authority and usage of the Ancient Churches, the study of the Doctrine whereof, the Learned *Usher* calls a Noble Study: And that the Church both have had a constant use of such Customs, and right to make and impose them, I could largely shew, by the judgment of all Reformed Divines, Ancient and Modern; *Beza, Bucer, Zuinglius, Chrimnitius, P. Martyn,* and *Calvin* himself saith, that such Customs as serve for the furtherance of Devotion, are not purely Humane, but Divine: * Sure I am, that we should retain and observe them, seems to be injoyned by Scriptures. Inquire of the former time, saith *Bildad,* and prepare thy self to the search of their Fathers (*y*). Look the old way, saith the Prophet (*z*). It was not so from the beginning, saith our Saviour (*a*). And what a high valuation S. *Paul* sets upon the Customs of the Church, appears by his arguing (*b*): If any man seems to be contentious, we have no such Custom, neither the Churches of God: He is there reproving the *Corinthians* Innovation of Women praying uncovered, and men covered. This ill fashion S. *Paul* confuteth with several reasons, drawn from the power

Vide *Littler's* Reformed Presbyterian. *Hooker's* Ecclesiastical Polity, Mr. *Baxter's* Disputation with several other Authors.

* Cal. *Inst. lib.* 1. *cap.* 10. *Sect.* 30

y Job 8. 8.
z Jer. 6. 16.
a Mat. 19. 8

b 1 Cor. 11. 16.

power of Man over his Wife, appealing alſo to natural decency therein; and at laſt concludes with this cloſe, that they could alledge no ſuch Cuſtom in Gods Churches, and to run counter to the Univerſal practice of Chriſtianity, is a note of contentiouſneſs, if any man ſeem, *&c.* Now if a Church-Cuſtom carried weight with it in S. *Paul's* time, when among Chriſtians, it could not be of above forty years ſtanding, what a Reverence is due then to thoſe Cuſtoms that are continued in Gods Church ever ſince it was gathered; which are like *Melchiſedecks* (*c*), without Father, without Mother, or without diſſent, whoſe firſt original cannot be found out; which began at the firſt, or near the firſt, and ſo ſhould in all reaſon, and good manners, be continued till the laſt coming of our Saviour.

(*c*) Heb. 7. 3.

* The great Objection I know is, that theſe Cuſtoms and Ceremonies injoyned, are an impeachment of our Chriſtian Liberty; but methinks to ſcruple at them, and hazard the Churches Peace, and our Superiours diſpleaſure for them, ſhould rather impeach our Liberty indeed, eſpecially conſidering that they are not urged as obligatory to Conſcience, *per ſe*, in them-

* See this well anſwered in Dr. *Edw. Stillingfleet's Irenicum*, page 56.

themſelves, but only as they are impoſed by Lawful Authority, for Orders ſake. And whatever ſuch are commended by the Churches Cuſtoms, or our Superiours Commands, or convenient circumſtances, our Chriſtian Liberty conſiſts in this, that we have leave to do them; and our refuſing to comply with theſe, can hardly proceed from any thing better, than a proud affectation of ſingularity, or at beſt a ſuperſtitious ſcrupuloſity in us. Sure I am the Apoſtle implicitly brands it with contention; and therefore to ſubmit to them, and retain and obſerve them, it is an excellent way to this ſpeaking the ſame things, and that there be no diviſions amongſt us.

11. To this end alſo I exhort you to an ἀπροσωποληψία, a not having the Faith of God with reſpect of perſons (*d*): Take heed of partiality, or making your ſelves the ſervants of men (*e*), an enthralling your judgments to the fancies of any Sect or Party, but rather caſt to bear an equal affection to Truth and Piety by whomſoever it be profeſſed; for Truth and Piety is Gods, whereſoever it grows, as a Mine of Gold or Silver is the Princes, in whoſe ground ſoever it be diſco-

d James 2. 1.

e 1 Cor. 7. 23.

discovered: ὑπροσώποις χειστιανισμὸς ἀλλὰ πίστει χαρακτηρίζεται. The contrary to this is as great an occasion of divisions as any I know of. It was S. *Austin*'s complaint of the *Donatists* in his time: if one came amongst them, and assured them of his Religion, *Christianus sum*; that he was Baptized, *fidelis sum*; that he lived in the Churches Peace, *Catholicus sum*: *Christianus*, *fidelis*, *Catholicus*, all would not serve the turn to be imbraced by them: an Unity with Christians in his Catholick Church would not do it, he must hold of another head, or else be no Saint: *Donatus* his Ear-mark must be set upon him, or he be rejected. It is the very case this of the dividers of this Age; be a man never so good a Christian, never so pious or peaceable, damned he is, to hell he must go, if he joyn not himself to a Side and Faction, which by many is nick-named their Friends, their Brethren (by way of appropriation) the Godly, the Kingdom of Christ, and the like. Every one is partial to his own side he takes to, beyond all reason, ready to justifie them in their most suspitious Enterprizes, and to extenuate their most palpable excesses, and as ready to misconstrue the most justifiable

ſtifiable actions of the adverſe part; yea, to aggravate to the utmoſt their moſt pardonable and ſmalleſt aberations; what is this but at once to juſtifie the Guilty, and condemn the Innocent? either of which alone is an abomination unto the Lord (*f*). Hitherto appertains that which the Apoſtle calls, having mens perſons in admiration (*g*): for there be many that have ſuch a high Opinion of ſome men, that they are apt to receive whatſoever they deliver as the undoubted Oracles of God, though perhaps wanting both probability and proof: And on the other ſide, they have ſuch a prejudice againſt ſome others, though perhaps of better worth, greater Learning, and more real Piety, and ſounder judgment, as to ſuſpect and diſguſt every thing that comes from them, (eſpecially if it doth not *ſapere ad pallatum*) let them lay down their Doctrine never ſo clearly, or prove it never ſo ſubſtantially.† Thus partial affections to a Side, or to a Party, corrupts the judgments of men, and inclines them very naturally to diviſions: And ſo long as men are thus carried away with ſuch partialities and prejudice, they ſhall never rightly perform their duties either to God

f Pro. 17. 15.

g Jude 16.

† partial affections

God or man. Now, I beſeech you Brethren, let us otherwiſe learn Chriſt, let us content our ſelves with Chriſts Livevery, and as ſuch hear his Voice. We have our Faith and Appellation from Chriſt, not from any other perſon; let us not upon any theſe undue reſpects to any party of men, hold or let go Truth, or Piety, or Unity, and ſo make Merchandiſe of it; contrary to that of *Solomon*, (*h*) *Buy the Truth, and ſell it not.* The Orthodox Believers in the Primitive Church, did ever keep themſelves to the ſtile of *Antioch* Chriſtians, refuſing the Name of *Petriani* or *Pauliani*, or *Pais Donati*, I am of *Paul*, or I of *Peter*, or I of *Donatus*: thus let us do, let us lay aſide all dividing names and affections to any party, for thoſe do naturally hinder us from ſpeaking the ſame things, and do uphold diviſions amongſt us: Therefore laying aſide all ſuch partiality,

h Pro. 28. 23.

12. Let us all joyn our forces unanimouſly againſt the Common Adverſary. Juſt as *David* did, when his Brethren the *Jews* had provoked him much, yet could not he be ſtirred up to fight againſt them, but uſed all his skill and force againſt the *Philiſtines* (*i*). It is promiſed as a bleſſed

i 1 Sam. 17. 7, 12.

fruit

fruit of the Goſpel, which every godly man prayeth for, and deſireth to ſee, that *the Wolf ſhall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard ſhall lye down with the Kid, and the Calf, and the young Lyon, and the Fatling be together, and a little Child ſhall lead them* (*k*): *That* Ephraim *and* Judah *ſhall ceaſe to annoy and vex one another,* (*l*) *but all ſhould fly upon the ſhoulders of the* Philiſtines, *and ſpoil them of the* Eaſt. O that we could ſee this day, that we could lay aſide our civil enmities to joyn together againſt our common Adverſaries; this would be an happineſs upon earth, almoſt heavenly, if we could ſo ſpeak the ſame things, that there were no diviſions amongſt us.

k Eſay 11. 6.

l Verſe 13.

13. To this end let us follow peace joyntly, and the things that make for mutual peace and unity: Let each of us, in our ſeveral places, not only have pious affections thereunto, but alſo put to all our skill and wiſdom, and caſt about for the moſt proper and ſeaſonable means conducing to ſo good an end. διώκωμεν. It is not enough for every one of us to accept it, or deſire it, or meet it half way, or let it in, or welcom it when it comes, but we muſt proſecute, purſue, and go after it:

We

We muſt venture our ſelves for it to a *ſi fortè*, & *quantum in nobis*, if by any means we may overtake and apprehend it. Let peace and unity be our rule, not in- † tangling our Conſciences by ſcruples where we need not, taking the way that leads to the Land of Peace and Promiſe, not by Mount *Ebal*, by pride, and malice, and ambition, and Schiſmatical contentions, but by Mount *Gerizim*, by humility, and charity, and meekneſs, and unanimity, and piety. Thus let us do that we may all ſpeak the ſame things, and that there be no diviſions amongſt us.

14. Yet when all thoſe Rules are obſerved, except the Lord build the houſe, they labour but in vain that build it. *Paul* may plant, and *Apollo* may water, but his bleſſing is it which muſt perfect all. By all theſe convincing reaſons and inſinuations, we can but work upon your outward ſenſes, and by the ſenſe repreſent fit motives to your underſtandings: It is God only that can bow and frame your hearts to peace and unity; we may perſwade to unity, unanimity, and uniformity, and ſome of you may wiſh it, but if the God of Peace do not ſet in with us, it will not take effect. *Non perſuadebis etiamſi*

amſi perſuaſeris, It is God that ſhall perſwade *Japhet* to dwell in the Houſe of
m Gen. 9. *Shem* (*m*); *Noah*'s perſwaſions will not do it, nor *Shem*'s, though they ſhould ſpeak with the tongues of men and Angels: Let God perſwade *Japhet*, and *Japhet* will be perſwaded; God is a Lover of Concord, and the Author of Peace. Alas, without him, what can be expected from us, whoſe diſpoſition, by reaſon of that pride that aboundeth in us, are naturally turbulent and ſelf-willed. The heart of man is a ſour piece of Clay, wondrous ſtubborn and churliſh, not to be wrought upon but by an Almighty Power. What man is able to take down his own pride ſufficiently? (many a good man have more ado with this one Viper than with all other his corruptions beſides:) but how much leſs is any man able to ſubdue and beat down the pride of another mans ſpirit? only God, with the ſtrength of his Arm, is able to throw down every exalting thought, and to lay the higheſt Mountains level with the loweſt Flats. It is he alone that can infuſe a ſpirit into us, that will eat out, by degrees, that canker'd proud fleſh, that breedeth all vexations and contentions:

He

He can subdue that self-love that is in every mans bosom, and make us so vile in our own eyes, that whereas we are naturally prone to esteem better of our selves than of all other men, we shall, through lowliness of mind, esteem every other man better than our selves (*n*): In vain shall we Wrestle with our own corruptions, though we put to all our strength, and wrestle with great wrestlings; as *Jacob* said upon the birth of *Nepthali* (*o*), so long as we wrestle with them only. We must therefore to the use of all other means, a joynt obedience to agreed truths, moderation of zeal wherein we differ, humility, reflecting our censures and zeal upon our selves chiefly, keeping within our Callings; sobriety, closeness to the form of sound words, and the Churches Customs; impartiality, uniting against the common Adversary, and following peace by all means. To them all we must add our wrestlings with the Almighty (as *Jacob* did) by our importunate and unceasiant prayers, for this blessing of Peace and Unity. Pray for the Peace of *Jerusalem*, that he would repair the breaches, and build up the walls thereof; that he would give his Word of Peace a

n Phil. 2. 3.

o Gen. 30. 8.

free paſſage into the heads and hearts, into the conſciences and converſations of all his people; that ſo we all ſpeaking the ſame things, without diviſions amongſt us, may grow up together unto a perfect man, to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt; which the Lord grant for the merits and mercies of his beloved Son Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous, to whom with the Father and the Bleſſed Spirit, three Perſons, and one Immortal and only wiſe God, be all Glory, Praiſe, and Thankſgiving, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

FINIS.

SOUND CONSIDERATIONS FOR TENDER CONSCIENCES:

Wherin is shewed their

OBLIGATION

Not to forsake the

PUBLICK ASSEMBLIES

OF THE

CHURCH,

IN SEVERAL

SERMONS

upon HEB. 10 25.

By *Joseph Briggs*, M. A. Vic. of *Kirkburton* in *Yorkshire*.

LONDON,
Printed for *Nathaniel Brooks* and are to be sold at the Angel in *Cornhil*. 1674.

The Epiſtle to the Reader; wherein ſome new Pleas for Conventicles are conſidered.

Courteous Reader,

I Do not invite thee to read, unleſs thou needeſt inſtructions in this Subject, and unleſs thou be an impartial and conſiderate man; nor will I at all flatter thee to an applauſe or approbation, but leave it entirely to thy Chriſtian judgment and diſcretion, to uſe theſe my Labours as thou findeſt them. It is not (I aſſure thee) a conceit of Self-worth that ingaged me to imprint them, or that can oblige thee to caſt a candid eye upon them: Only this I ſay, to my weak apprehenſion (ſuch as it is) the Doctrines herein delivered are Divine Truths; and, as ſuch, I make bold to offer them to the Worlds Tryal. Thy part it is to examine them, and with thoſe Noble *Bereans* to ſearch the Scriptures, and ſee if the things ſpoken be according unto them; which if they be, take thou heed of being found in the number of ſelfiſh or envious gain-ſayers: for if thou

reject Truth, or do not receive it in the love thereof, by whomſoever it be ſpoken, to the God of Truth thou muſt anſwer for it in the Great Day of Judgment.

It was wont to be a Rule of Peace amongſt Divines, that let but Diſſenters keep their Opinions to themſelves, or to their Families, or make them Rules for their own private practiſes only, and who will then moleſt or contradict them? This Liberty of Conſcience is freely granted to every man, to worſhip God himſelf, or with his Family, according to his Conſcience, *i.e.* in ſuch a way and manner as his Conſcience (his Judging Faculty) judgeth moſt acceptable. * But if any man will go publiſh his Opinion, to intangle the Conſciences of others, and ſeek to draw Diſciples to himſelf, and make a Party, and cauſe diviſions and diſſentions amongſt his Majeſties Subjects, and ſo trouble the Publick State, and diſtract it; to reſtrain ſuch, or puniſh them, is no ſin in the Magiſtrate, no Tyranny over the Conſciences of men, no Perſecution or Oppreſſion ‖, but it is his duty thus to keep men from infecting his Subjects Souls with Errours or Hereſies. †

* *Vide* Biſhop *Sanderſon*'s ſeventh Sermon *ad populum*, pag. 384.

‖ Vide *Aſhton*'s Epiſtle before his book, called, Toleration diſapproved, &c

† *Vide* Mr. *Calamy*'s Sermon before the Lords, *Decemb* 25 1644. P. 38

But

But now, as the matter goes, this great Evil ſeems to be unavoidable, and like a moſt violent Torrent to bear all before it,

Blaſphemers, Schiſmaticks, Hereticks, and Idolaters, think themſelves looſe and unfettered; to our teeth they ſay it, they may now live as they liſt, they may publiſh their Erronious Opinions, and intangle others Conſciences, and draw Diſciples, and make Parties, and cauſe diviſions and diſſentions, ſuch as we may juſtly fear will never be hereafter healed by any ordinary means: It were ſad, if we had no way left us to reſiſt theſe Publick Annoyances; but (bleſſed be God) it is not ſo, this Remedy we have, freedom to profeſs and publiſh Gods pure Word, which is ſtrong, and will prevail (*a*). *a* 1 Eſdras 4. 35.

†For my part I am no Enemy unto men, but only to their Errours: and if I may be believed in this Infidel, yet credulous Age, I have no inward rancour or ill-will to a *Presbyterian*, but love the moderate and ſober with all my heart, and do conceive him the beſt of Sects, though fouly too blame in laying a Foundation for others that are intolerable to build upon, and countenancing them when his

own Intereſt ſeems to require it. Nor would I (if poſſibly I can avoid it) exaſperate him in the leaſt, but have purpoſely avoided all tart ſarcaſtical Exprobations as much as I could, except the matter in hand required naturally a ſharp
† *N.* reproof. † Paſſion ſeldom advantageth Truth; the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God.

The nature and evil of Schiſm have been by many excellent Authors largely and irrefragably opened and manifeſted; yet may theſe following Sermons, eſpecially in this preſent juncture of Publick Affairs, add ſome further light thereunto, at leaſt by way of Genuine Conſequence: For if mens Obligation to their own Paſtors, and the ſinfulneſs of forſaking the Publick Aſſemblies upon mens modern pretences be once cleared, where the Schiſm is, and at whoſe door it lies, will eaſily appear to any intelligent man. Hence am I apt to think the Truths here delivered (for ſo I really think them) will be diſguſtful to this gain-ſaying and rebellious Generation: Nor need we think it ſtrange, that men ſhould account us their Enemies for their ſakes (for telling them the truth) Thus do we but ſip of that

that Cup our Saviour, and his Prophets, and Apoſtles drunk of; and we are but ſprinkled with that Baptiſm that they were baptized withal.

But this we may think ſtrange, that theſe Truths ſhould be ſo unſavoury unto them, in whoſe mouths they were once thought ſound and indiſputable; nay, that thoſe who will not allow any thing, no, not a pin or a nail, the leaſt circumſtance in Divine Worſhip, without an expreſs Scripture for it, and who cannot (I ſuppoſe) contradict the Doctrines here preſſed and proved out of the Scriptures, nay, who themſelves (when time was) did urge them as ſeriouſly and vigorouſly as we now can do, ſhould now, when they are put in mind of them, ſet their brains upon the Rack to invent new Pleas and Apologies (grounds only in their own fancies) to elude them.

Let but any ſober forreign Divine, or Divines of the Reformed Churches, that are unintereſted in the Cauſe, conſider well the Conſtitution of our Church, and compare what hath been formerly ſaid by the beſt *Presbyterian* Guides againſt Toleration (as they are well and faithfully repreſented by Mr. *Aſhdon* in his Treatiſe of Tolera-

Toleration diſapproved,) and as they are handſomely applied to our preſent caſe in the Book of Toleration not to be abuſed:) I ſay, let any impartial Judge compare theſe with what is ſaid in pretence of Anſwer, and I think he could not but be aſtoniſhed with the evident diſcovery of a love of contradiction in the greateſt Pretenders to Love and Godlineſs the World hath ever had: For what can be more light and frivolous in any rational men, then to think to paſs over ſuch weighty conſiderations (as are in thoſe Books offered) with ſuch ſlight of hand, as only to anſwer, that none can know the
A3 Nonconformiſts minds better than themſelves; that when they inveighed againſt Toleration, they never meant that themſelves ſhould not be tolerated; that now the Kings Indulgence, or permiſſion of their Separate Meetings, frees them from the imputation of Schiſm; that the intruding Miniſters come only as Aſſiſtants to the Pariſh-Miniſter, and ſo offers no violation to the peoples obligation to him: And laſtly, that their Meeting-places are in the nature of Chappels of Eaſe.

This ſeems to be as like the Womans looking at her Apron-Strings (as we uſe to

to ſay) to find an Excuſe, when put hard to it, as poſſible can be imagined? What will not men do to uphold a Party they have Eſpouſed? Well may they plead for Chriſtian Liberty unweariedly, that cannot do, without this Liberty, to ſay and unſay, and ſay what they liſt.

Now, as I think, theſe Novel Pleas for Private Aſſemblies, in oppoſition to Publick meetings, muſt of themſelves neceſſarily fall before the ſound Doctrines delivered in theſe Sermons; ſo do I conceive them ſo ungrounded in holy Scripture, and ſo inconſiſtent with ſound Reaſon, and the experience of any ordinary Chriſtian, that they deſerve no ſerious Confutation.

But yet becauſe Mr †*Baxter* (a man to † *Ib.* whom for ſome of his Works I bear a very great reverence) hath (in his Sacrilegious Deſertion of the Holy Miniſtry) laid theſe particulars down, as being ſatisfactory to himſelf, and offers them to others for ſatisfaction of their Conſciences, and anſwering our Objections againſt them: I humbly conceive this Reverend Perſon hath herein written not like himſelf; and as if he had repented of any good he had done, or hoped to do by his

Cure

Cure of the Churches Diviſions, he could not have deviſed a more effectual courſe to undo all. Thus hath he cheriſhed us (of the Church) with one hand, and ſmitten us with the other: Thus hath he acted the part of an unfaithful Phyſitian, who when afraid his Cure ſhould be wrought, too ſoon adminiſters contrary Phyſick. I affect not to thruſt myſelf into a Fray with him, or any other of that perſwaſion, nor do I pretend to Anſwer his Book, which it is fitter others ſhould do, if it be thought needful; nor do I glory to be a Diſcoverer of ſo great an Authors Errours: but being requeſted by a Friend to add a word or two concerning thoſe chief Pleas I before mentioned, which are ſo much magnified and inſiſted upon by ſuch as forſake our Aſſemblies, I will attempt to diſcover their nakedneſs by Gods help: The three latter I mean, for the two firſt deſerve not to be again mentioned.

13. 1. It is ſaid by ſome, that the Kings Indulgence and Declaration of Toleration doth evidently acquit all private Meetings from the imputation of Schiſm. In anſwer, It is not fit for me, or any other Son of the Church (who profeſs the ſtricteſt

ſtricteſt obedience and loyalty) to make any ſawcy deſcant upon his Majeſties actions: He is wiſe as an Angel of God, and freely do we ſubmit to his Deliberate Councels and determinature, but yet to us it belongs to conſider the nature and extent of his Condeſcenſions and the grounds and reaſons thereof ſo far as he is pleaſed to make them known unto us: and thus doing, how little cauſe, thoſe that will weigh all things in the ballance of the Sanctuary, (Scripture and ſound Reaſon) and not *jurare in verba* take every thing upon truſt from the Guids of any perſwaſion; I ſay how little cauſe theſe have to think this a ſufficient plea to free the Conventiclers from Schiſm, if they have nothing elſe wherein to take Sanctuary, will appear if we conſider, 2.

1. The Extent of his Majeſties Declaration, and that at the utmoſt is a mere indulgence or permiſſion of that which he therein and at all times hath declared contrary to his own judgment. the Author of Toleration not to be abuſed, evidently ſhewes * that the ſcope of the Declaration is not to make ſuch Separated congregation more lawful, than they was before, or to approve them as good and

*Sect. Prov. 2

and lawful, but rather supposeth them to be sinful, at least in his own judgment, while he only permits them (that is all) just as *Moses* did the Bills of Divorce for the hardness of mens hearts: And let the Authority of Church-Assemblies in a National Constituted Church be once clear, and I conceive the unlawfulness of separate Meetings, in opposition unto them, naturally follows; and how then can his Majesties Indulgence acquit and absolve them, if there be nothing else that doth it. It is well known, that if his Majesty should not only Approve, but Command, and that not only by Declaration, but by Act of Parliament, that which is but suspected to be unlawful; nay, perhaps declared by all parties to be in it self indifferent, the *Presbyterian* is not apt to change his judgment, or practise for it, but is oftentimes more hardened in his opposition thereunto, by its being commanded, and how then can a bare permission now serve their turns? †His Majesty only permits and leaves men to the guidance of their own Consciences what to do, whether to forsake the Publick Assemblies, and set up their separate Meetings or no; so that if there be no satisfactory ground for

Vide Toleration not to be used.

M3

Car. 2.

for a good Conſcience to do it, the ſaid Declaration muſt needs leave them as guilty of Schiſm from the Church, (though not as rebellious againſt his Majeſties Laws) as before.

2. The Reaſons which the King is pleaſed to acknowledge did prevail with him, are evidently Politick, to tolerate theſe Meetings not for themſelves, but ſome other ends and reaſons of State, even to ſecure his quiet at home, while he is ingaged in Forreign Wars. Now how can this ſatisfie Conſcience of the lawfulneſs thereof, or free the Actors from the guilt of ſeparation? Surely no more than thoſe inconveniences and unlawful actions are juſtifiable becauſe *David* winked at them, and ſuffered them go unpuniſhed, when he cryed out the Sons of *Zeruiah* are too hard for me.

3. By the Declaration, the Argument for Conformity taken from wrath only is removed, only the penalty is taken off, the directive part of the Law, I conceive, is ſtill in force; ſo that if it did at all oblige Conſcience before, Conſcience hath no more liberty now than then, though the body and purſe have.

4. That which (in my judgment) leaves them

them inexcuſeable is, that his Gracious Majeſty in his ſaid Declaration is pleaſed in terms to acknowledge the Church of *England* is eſtabliſhed by Law, and makes it the ſtanding Rule, and that in oppoſition and contradiction to private Meetings, yea, though they ſhould be allowed of according to the Indulgence. His expreſs meaning and reſolution is declared to be, that the National Church of *England* ſhould be preſerved entire, as the Baſis, Rule, and Standard of Publick Worſhip among us. Now this evidently ſuppoſeth all other (though tolerated) Meetings, beſides Church-Aſſemblies, to be againſt the Rule, and Sects and Schiſmes from the National Church. In this is manifeſtly implyed, that to ſet them up, is to do that which the Ancient Fathers, eſpecially S. *Cyprian*, and our Modern Orthodox Divines, both Epiſcopal and Presbyterian, have ſo earneſtly declaimed againſt; viz. *Erigere Altare contra Altare*; to ſet up Altar againſt Altar, a Church in a National Church independent from it, yet conſiſting of ſuch as are its Natural Members; to break this Churches Unity, and to divide the Members thereof, which apparently tends to the deſtruction of the whole:

Church. N3

whole: if the Church of *England* (as it is ſettled by the Act of Uniformity) be eſtabliſhed as the ſtanding rule for doctrine and worſhip, then is it impoſſible, I think, to defend thoſe that renounce Union and Communion with it and the publick aſſemblies thereof, though under pretence of exerciſing purer adminiſtrations. For ſo Mr. *Baxter* ſtates the Caſe, and for this conſult Dr. *Edward Stilingfleets Irenicum* upon the point, *c.* 6. Sure I am it can neither conſiſt with the Doctrines of the old non-Conformiſts, *Ball*, *Hilderſham*, *Dod*, *Perkins*, nor of the ſobereſt moderne diſſenters. So much for that Plea then from the Kings Indulgence. 12. Car. 2. 17.

2. Like unto it is the ſecond, that the Preachers in theſe ſeparate Meetings look upon themſelves only as aſſiſtants to the pariſh Miniſter, and ſo would they have us to look upon them. Here is ſheeps clothing, but I fear a Wolf under it. Is it not od that any that will, ſhall have power thus to obtrude himſelf upon the lawfully ſettled Paſtor, how much ſoever he be unacquainted with his perſon, or diſſatisfied with his education or principles, ablities or Converſation? I do not ſpeak it out of rancor or bitterneſs, but in good ſadneſs I look on it as a ſtrange incroachment upon and enſlaving of a Pariſh miniſter who being himſelf

bound up to Church rules, and orders both by his own Conſcience and the Kings eſtabliſhing the Church as the ſtanding rule. And how learned and pious and Grave a Divine ſoever he be, yet muſt he have his people at liberty, to chooſe to themſelves another Paſtor, perhaps a man in holy orders, perhaps not, and he muſt be accounted his Aſſiſtant though he have none, no not the leſt knowledg of him, except (perhaps) he can call to mind, or his Contemporaries can remember him, that ſuch a one was expell'd the Univerſity as a rake heel, or ſtopt of his Degree as a Dunce, and this I le aſſure you is the Caſe of not a few in theſe parts, ſeveral ſuch being holders up of ſides and factions amongſt us, intruding themſelves into our charges without our conſent, nay, and expreſly againſt it, and gathering together a pail of our people, together with others out of pariſhes adjacent, to worſhip God at the very time of publike worſhip after their own inventions, and yet thoſe muſt be, our Aſſiſtant (forſooth). I marvel, what Shepherd or Maſter of a Family would be willing to have an Aſſiſtant thus thruſt himelf upon him whether he will or no, and take part of his flock from under his proper care and inſpection and governance upon pretence

of

of aſſiſting him! juſt Such an aſſiſtant I fancy the Woolf in the Fable to be (and* you know whom the Holy Ghoſt Compares to him) when he perſwaded the Lambs to diſcharge their dogs in pretence of ſafety, there was no need of them. And we may juſtly challenge an excuſe if we look upon many as no better, that will thruſt themſelves upon us as our aſſiſtants. * Take us the foxes the little foxes that ſpoils the vins; * thoſe foxes are Hereticks or Schiſmaticks within the pale of the Church (ſay the Aſſembles Annotations) as well as Tirants or perſecutors without. The former have not only the craft of that beaſt, transforming themſelves, 2 *Cor* 11. 13. carrying a fox in their boſomes when they are lambs outwardly, but alſo the rage and cruelty; when they get power, none like them; for never did the Church ſuffer more from the maddeſt and blindeſt Heathens, than from Heretickes and Schiſmaticks that were amongſt them.

* Matth 7. 15.

* Cant. 2. 15. * See Dr. Prideaux upon this Text

They ſpoil the Vines, *i. e.* they corrupt them even the Churches * which they do either by fraud or force, by falſe doctrines or wicked manners; either by Hereſies which are the great Foxes, or Schiſmes which are but little ones at firſt, but like cubs will

* Pſa. 80 14. 15.

grow into bigneſs * 1*Cor.* 11. 18, 19. Theſe are to be taken, that is, found out, judged, convinced, cenſured, reproved, and puniſhed * this was ſound Doctrine once you ſee, how ever it be now reliſhed. Take us the little Foxes, ſaith Chriſt, they are Foxes, though little ones; no let them alone, ſay our Indulgence-men, they will be your Aſſiſtants. Well, to confine my ſelf in this ſpatious field, I muſt needs ſay, that if this may paſſe for a ſufficient plea, (though conjunctly with the reſt) then, farewel the Doctrine of publick worſhip and farewel, the people obligations to their paſtors; and farewel too all thoſe excellent anſwers the Presbyterian Guides have often formerly given to the Browniſts grounds of ſeperation.

This agrees with Mr. Newcomes Sermon at Pauls Heb. 8. 16 46. pag. 18. quoted by Mr. Aſhdon in his preface pag. 12. See more in the Aſſemblies Annotations upon the text.

But let us (the Church Miniſters) beg the Worlds pardon, if with *Solomons* wiſe man we have our eyes in our head and would be loth to have them put out: if our own experiences be truſted ſo far that we can never believe that they (theſe gatherers of Churches) will ever prove our Aſſiſtants, but rather annoyances to us; pricks in our eyes, and goads in our ſides continually; for they have already ſet our people a cock-loft with preſumptions, they may now live

as

as they liſt; they break the bounds of that ſtrict relation that is betwixt us and them; they pull down what we build up (order & Decency in Gods worſhip, Obedience and Subjection to Governors both in Church and State) we find them evidently Contradicting us in our ſoundeſt Doctrines; (when I firſt preached upon this text *Heb.* 10. 25. I took occaſion to give the right ſenſe of that text *Math.* 18. 20. *Where two or three are met together &c.* and this I did out of the *London Annotations*, and Mr. *Ball.* and S *Cyprian* (which I freely ſubmitt to the judgment of any impartial Reader) But loe, ſo it fell out, that the conventicle man, my ſuppoſed Aſſiſtant, preacht on purpoſe on that text, the direct Contrary to what I had deliver'd, that very afternoon, if I was informed aright from thoſe that, either out of novelty or faction, went to hear him) nay, our people can with their odious Compariſons undervalue our Sermons, preferring thoſe they have in their Kilns, and Barns, and Smith Shops (to uſe their own dialect) as much as light before darkneſs. Now have we not great Cauſe (think ye) to eſteem them our worthy Aſſiſtants? I conclude, unleſs we could, hate our ſelves or our people, and

be wholly careleſs of both, we can never allow this notion of Aſſiſtants, but upon this very account muſt (indeed in Mr. *Baxters* judgment) think theſe ſeparate meetings unlawful, becauſe we find by ſad experience, they do far more hurt than good if they do any good at all *.

Vid Sacre legius Deſertion. pag. 18.

3. A like pretence is that of the place of meeting that they muſt be look'd upon as Chappels of eaſe. Bravely ſaid! they are no oppoſite Schiſmatical meetings I warrant you, but as Chappells of eaſe! a notion, that doubtleſs coſt many a nocturnal Lucubration or hot diſpute in a private Conference. It is ſo far fetcht it ſmells of the Lamp. The firſt Author (whoever he was) might well applaud his happy Invention with an εὕρηκα, as if he had found out the moſt hidden myſtery, or received an oracle, for ſuch a kind reception it hath found in our parts as if it were really ſuch. But the miſchief is, we of the Church, though we be branded for it, cannot but declare our diſſatisfaction, as much with this as with the other Inventions, and the reaſon is, our own Experience ſtill teacheth us fooles otherwiſe. For ask our experiences, for whoſe caſe theſe new erected Chappels are like to ſerve, and they will preſently anſwer

ſwer not for the Church Miniſters, for ſure. (And while we preach and ſtudy to preach Continually being in labours abundant, why ſhould we be enemies to our own neceſſary eaſe altogether?)

Now theſe do evidently occaſion us infinite inſuperable troubles; they divide our peoples into ſides and parties; they ſet our people a cockloft in rebellion againſt us; they do in a few dayes annul all that we have done in many years, towards the bringing our people into a way of order and obedience; they fill the peoples mouths with inſultations againſt their Paſtors; they ſet them in a poſture of defiance againſt us; they render it moſt difficult for us either to keep an amicable Correſpondence with our people or procure our tithes and juſt maintenance from them; they enſlave us to their humors, for if we diſpleaſe or reprove them in the leaſt, or deny them any Common courteſie, preſently they tell us, they can go to theſe ſeparate meetings and be welcome; and ſo many miſchiefes hereof we daily feel, that I may juſtly Conclude this with that which our Adverſaries hate, even an *&c.* for they certainly Unhinge the Government both of the whole

Church and of every particular Pariſh.

But perhaps theſe Chappels of eaſe are for the peoples eaſe or profit, if they be, it is juſt as *Jeroboams Dan* and *Bethel* was, * for them he intended as Chappels of eaſe, to the people; Saying, it is too much for you to go up to *Jeruſalem*, but his meaning was leaſt the people, going up to do ſacrifice there, ſhould turn again to their Lord *Rehoboam* *. He pretended the peoples accommodation and eaſe, as a cloak to cover his own diffidence and curſed policy. Juſt the like plea is uſed by ſome for theſe Chappels of eaſe, the Pariſhes are too large, it is too much for them to go to the Church for then perhaps in time we might bring them back again to their juſt duties and obedience, or if you will, they are ſuch Chappels of eaſe as *Samaria* was to *Jeruſalem* †, *Manaſſe*, brother to *Jaddo*, the High prieſt of the returned Jewes, had married the daughter of *Sanballat* then governor of *Samaria* and for this he was expelled *Jeruſalem* by *Nehemiah*, and therefore he fled to *Sanballat* his father in law, and after his example many other of the Jewes of the beſt ranks, having married ſtrange wives likewiſe, and loath to forgo them betook themſelves

* 1 Kings 12. 28. 29.

Vers. 27.

† See Mr. Joſeph *Meed Diatribæ. pag.* 205. *Nehe* 13. 28.

themſelves thither alſo: *Sanballat* willingly entertained them, and made his ſon in Law *Manaſſe* their Prieſt, for whoſe greater reputation and State, when *Alexander* the great ſubdued the Perſian Monarchy, he obtained leave of him to build a Temple upon Mount *Gerizim*; where his ſon in Law exerciſed the office of the High Prieſt. Now this became an occaſion of a Continual Schiſme for thoſe that were diſcontented or excommunicated at *Jeruſalem* preſently betook themſelves to *Samaria*, and juſt ſo do our people in the ſame caſe to theſe new licenſed Chappels of eaſe, and the Samaritan preachers thereof, which whether it be a ſchiſme, and a breach of the Unity of the Catholick Church, I leave to thoſe to judg, who have read how ill the Biſhops in the primitive Churches reſented it when other their fellow Biſhops received thoſe they had excommunicated into their Communion.

And now, Reader, do but Conſider that not one of theſe pretences but they ſerve the turnes of all Sects, one as well as other, Independents, Anabaptiſts, and Quakers, as well as the better ſort of non-Conformiſts, all alike, and ſo they are by Mr. *Baxter*

Baxter lovingly coupled together as brethren and indeed to them all theſe pleas are equally ſubſervient; Conſider but this, and then I ſubmit all that is ſaid both here and in the Sermons to this equal and impartial cenſure, and as I freely give leave thou ſhould reject whatever is tart or ſarcaſtical above what the nature of the thing requires, or whatever to thy more Sound judgment ſhall appear falſe and untrue; ſo do I only requeſt of thee this favour (to which even thy ſelf intereſt obligeth thee) that is to believe me, wherever thou ſeeſt reaſon or Scripture for what I ſay. Conſider all and the Lord give thee underſtanding in all things.

THE

THE OBLIGATION OF CONSCIENCE

Not to forſake PUBLICK ASSEMBLIES.

Hebrewes. 10. 25.

Not forſaking the aſſembling of our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is.

BEfore I cloſe with my Text, give me leave to ſhew you in a few words, what great reaſons I have to make choice of it, for the ſubject of my preſent diſcourſe. Theſe are three, My duty, Your neceſſity, and all Our comfort.

1. My duty in reſpect of the Church of God, as a Member, but eſpecially as a Miniſter thereof. As a Member, for it is every Chriſtians duty, to inform himſelf by the beſt meanes he can, how it fareth with the Church of God, but eſpecially

to

to take notice of, and be affected with the State of that particular Church, whereof he is an immediate member. Men are moſt what too inquiſitive of news, behold this is the news we ſhould inquire after. When Gods people were in battel againſt the Philiſtines, and had the Ark of God with them in the Camp, it is ſaid (*a*) that old *Eli*, ſate upon a ſeat in the way ſide watching and hearkning, how Gods people ſped: and the reaſon is given *for his heart trembled, for the Ark of God*, therefore he ſate watching, that he might hear what became of it. So when there came one to *David* out of the Camp of *Iſrael* (*b*) *David* was very inquiſitive how it fared with the Lords hoſt: *How went the matter* (ſaith he) *I pray thee tell me.* The like you ſee in *Nehemiah*, (*c*) ſo ſoon as *Hanani* came to him, the firſt queſtion he asked him, was concerning the ſtate of Gods people that dwelt at *Jeruſalem*, though he wanted nothing himſelf being a Courtier in great place and favour, with that mighty King, yet could he not but inquire of, and be affected with the ſtate of Gods people. Nay *Moſes* being in the height of honour in *Pharoahs* Court did not onely inquire, but went out to his brethren

a 1 Sam 4. 13.

b 2 Sam 1. 3.4.

c Neh. 1.2.

brethren and looked on their burdens (*d*), All these examples teach us that it is our duty, as to inform our selves about, so to consider the burdens of Gods Church, and be affected with the miseries thereof, and every one in our several places, to have a care of the cause of Religion in the world, and especially we ought continually to inportune the Lord in behalf thereof, and never forget it in our prayers to God. Ye that have escaped the sword (*e*) *Stand not still remember*; *the Lord afar off, and let* Jerusalem *come into your mind.* Ye that are the Lords remembrancers, saith the Prophet *Esay* (f) *keep not silence and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make* Jerusalem *a praise in the earth.* *Jerusalem* is like to become a reproach, an hissing to the world more and more, if things go on as they do, but we therefore that are the Lords Solicitors and Remembrancers, (as all the Faithful are) should (like the importunate Widdow in the Gospel) give him no rest, till he have established and setled his Church in truth and peace, and so give them beauty and glory, even in the sight of their enemies, so did *Nehemiah* (g) *he sate down and wept and mourned certain dayes, and fasted and prayed*

d Exodus. 2. 11.

e Jeremiah 51. 50.

f Isaia. 62. 07.

g Nehe. 14.

prayed for the Churches miſeries, by this means he had wonderful ſucceſs in his ſuite to the King in their behalf. So might we the pooreſt and meaneſt of us all, help Gods Church very much, and prevail with God and againſt her enemies, if we would ſo cry, and weep, and pray before God for her. (*h*) When *Moſes* held up his hands *Iſrael* prevailed, and when he let his hands fall, *Amalek* prevailed, Alaſs our hearts and hands are heavy in prayer and therefore doth *Amalek* prevail ſo much as he doth, and *Iſrael* receiveth ſo many foiles, and is afflicted with ſo many ſucceſſions of miſeries. Such is the duty then of every Chriſtian, much more it is of every Miniſter of the Church, as to inform himſelf about, and to be affected with, ſo unceſſantly to pray for it, yea and to prayer to joyn all his indeavours to rebuke and oppoſe all the enemies thereof, ſecret or open, whether they be without or within the Church: it is no ſtanding a neuter in the holy wars of Gods people. He that is not with the Church to aſſiſt her, to the utmoſt of his power, is againſt it. *Meroz* is to be curſed that will not come out to the help of the Lord and his ſervants againſt the mighty.

Exodus. 17. 11.

The

The zeal of Gods ſervants was alwayes ſtirring and active to ſtop any Schiſmaticks or Hereticks that did in any Age riſe up in and againſt the Church of God. When in the Church of *Corinth*, there did but ſpring up a contention about ſo mean a ceremony as covering and uncovering their heads in prayer, (a very inconſiderable ceremony in compariſon) yet he that was e ver ready *to become all things to all men, that by all means he might win ſome*, did then beſtir himſelf by all means to oppoſe them in their preſumptuous violations of the cuſtomes and orders eſtabliſhed in their Churches, though it was but in and about indifferent things (*i*) ſuch is the duty then of every Chriſtian, member, much more of every Miniſter of the Church of God, and ſo is it my duty in particular as to take notice of and pray againſt, ſo as much as lieth in me to oppoſe all the Church enemies and that's one reaſon why I chooſe this text, *Not forſakeing*, &c. And as my duty ingageth me to this choice. ſo,

2. Your neceſſity, for there is none of you all, but you have great need to be well grounded in matters of the Churches Peace, and Unity, as well as, in any other points of Religion, elſe will you be in continual danger

h Judges 5. 23. *a Text ſtrangely urged in the late Civil wars againſt neutrality and lukewarmneſs by thoſe who hate us now implacably if we be not moderate now, as they call it, that is careleſs of the Churches welfare.*

i 1 Cor. 11. 16.

danger of being ſeduced, and ſo falling from your Baptiſm and Chriſtian Profeſſion; either on the right hand or on the left. For there are abundance of falſe Prophets gone out into the world, never was Satan more let loſe; never was there greater Swarms of Locuſts iſſuing out of the bottomleſs pit, never was the Church more peſtered with Schiſmes and Hereſies; never was there more broachers and fomentors of them; and theſe as they are moſt diligent, lying in wait to deceive, they'l Compaſs ſea and land to gather proſelytes, ſo have they all neceſſary artifices and tricks of ſubtilty in order to that end they have πιθανολογίαν (k) *enticeing words* to beguile poor ſouls, and κυβέια πανουργίας μεθοδείας (l) Slight and cunning craftineſs whereby *they lie in wait to deceive*; they have a great deal of cunning even ſuch as cheats and coggers at dice do uſe, much craft to beguile and circumvent them that they deal with, there is no ſafety in giving them the leaſt audience, or having any thing to do with them, for theſe ſeducers (as our experience teacheth us, and Gods ſpirit hath often admoniſhed us) have a notable veine of perſwading, being able to uſe many reaſons that at firſt ſight, carry in them

k Col. 2. 4.

l Eph. 4. 14.

them great probability, and *shew of truth:* hence it is that many there be who have at first wondered at the gross absurdities in a contrary Religion, and have thought them such as might be answered by any simple man, and so have scorned and abhorred them, that yet by being over confident of themselves, and careless in intertaining familiarity with those Seducers, have quickly been over born and fallen into the pit of damnable errors, such need there, is Beloved, for every one to ground themselves carefully in the knowledg of the truth, as that they may not be so easily turned out of the *right way*, but may make *straight paths for their feet, that they may go steadily* and strongly in it, (*m*) Alas they that are Children in understanding and wavering, *they are easily carryed away with every wind of vain Doctrine* (*n*), and the most pernicious and damnable seducers, do easily prevail with simple women, *that are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth* (*o*) they daily *beguile unstable souls*, (*p*) So great is your need then to be rightly informed in the knowledg of the truth, and to be well grounded in your religion, least you be unaware seduced to error and destructi-

Self confidence seldome stand firmly in a day of tryal witness Peter at Christs apprehension.

m Heb. 12. 13.

n Ephes. 4. 14.

o 2 Tim. 3. 6, 7.

p 2 Peter. 2. 14.

on, and that's another reaſon of my chooſing the Text, N*ot forſaking*, &c,

3. Another reaſon, it is in order to all our joy and comfort, for the fullneſs of our Church Aſſemblies, and if men could be diſſwaded from forſaking them, it could not but be matter of great joy and comfort to every truely pious heart. Such a one cannot but rejoyce in the frequency and fullneſs of the publick Aſſemblies of the Church, and in the Proſperity of the true Religion and right worſhip of God. How marvellouſly did Gods people rejoyce, in the dayes of *David*, when the Ark of God was brought to *Jerulem* (*q*). And in the dayes of *Hezekiah* when the ſacrament had been celebrated according to its firſt inſtitution, which it had not been of a long time before (*r*), So when *Nehemiah* had purged the houſe and worſhip of God from the corruptions thereof, and reſtored it to it's primitive purity, It is ſaid (*s*) *the people rejoyced with great joy, their wives alſo and their children rejoyced, ſo that the joy of* Jeruſalem *was heard even a far off.* And in *Ezra*, (*t*) *all Gods people ſhouted with a great ſhout, when they praiſed the Lord, becauſe the foundation of the houſe was laid:* ſo *David* to aggravate the miſery of his pre-

q 1 Chr. 15. 28.

r 2 Chr. 5. 26. 27.

s Neh. 12. v. 43.

t Ezra 3. 11.

ſent

sent estate (*v*) he speakes of the joy and comfort, he formerly took in going to the house of God with a multitude of them that kept holy day. And in that great joy the people of God had at the celebration of the passover in *Hezekiahs* time. This is expressed for one cause thereof, that the number of the communicants was so great (*w*) *for there Assembled to* Jerusalem *much people, to keeep the passover a very great congregation.* On the other side the faithful and truely pious have ever grieved to hear or see that the Assemblies of the Church are unfrequented or neglected, or that any false or Schismatical worship, or congregations were set up in stead thereof. Old *Eli* was much more afflicted for takeing a way of Gods arke then for the slaughter of the people, or for the death of his own two Sons *Hophni* and *Phinehas* (*x*), in like manner, the Holy Ghost noteth of his daughter in law, that being in extremities of her pain and anguish, it would never out of her mouth while breath was in her body, *that the glory was departed from* Israel, *for the ark of God was taken away* (*y*), so was it this that troubled that zealous man of God *Elijah*, and made him weary of his life (*z*),

v Psal 42. 4.

w 2 Chro 30. 26.

x 1 Sam 4. 17.

y 1 Sam 4. 22.

1 Kings 19. 10. *The children of* Iſrael *have forſaken thy covenant* ſaith he (that is, they are fallen from thy holy Religion) *they have thrown down thy holy altars*, (that is, they have aboliſhed, and ſhown, contempt and hatred to thy holy worſhip) *and why ſhould I then deſire to live any longer in ſuch a time?* And for the Eccliſe of Church Aſſemblies, we have a notable expreſſion (*a*) *I will gather them ſaith the Lord that are ſorrowful for ſolemne Aſſemblies, who are of thee to whom the reproach of it was a burden*: in which Text we may obſerve five things.

a Zeph 3, 18.

1. That it was one of the greateſt ſorrowes of Gods people, in their captivite, that they then wanted their ſolemne Aſſemblies; doubtleſs they might have then ſome Religious meetings for Gods worſhip, (yea they had publique faſts then four times a year as appears (*b*)) yet their Aſſemblies was nothing ſo ſolemne, or ſo populous, as they was want to be at *Jeruſalem*, that was their grief.

b Zech. 8. 19.

2. The Caldeans their enemies was wont to reproach them for this, and to ſay to them to this effect, *where are your ſolemne* Aſſemblies now (*c*) *they did mock at their Sabbaths, they rejoyced and reproached over them*, becauſe they could have no ſuch

c Lam. 1. 7.

Aſſemblies

Assemblies as they was wont to have, just as many wicked ones do now mock at our Churches, and their ministers, because people (having the reins loosed) may without fear forsake the publique Assemblies, to erect private conventicles for themselves, and do what they list as some can say to our very faces now

3. The Text saith *this was a burden to to Gods people, to have this reproach cast upon them*, as it is certainly to every true Protestant and godly man, to hear of the separatists insolent taunts to the congregations of the Church and the ministers thereof.

4. Of these that were so sorrowful for the solemne Assemblies, the Lord saith to his Church these are of thee, they are natural & Kindly children of the true Church, that do stand thus affected.

5. To them he doth make a promise, I will gather them, saith the Lord: I will have a special respect to them, and though they be scattered and dispersed, not one of them shall be lost, but *I will bring them back again to their* own *Land. I will gather them*, saith the Lord, *that are sorrwful for the solemn Assemblies who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it, was a burden.* Indeed

it

it is a burden to every one that hath a true love and zeal of God in him, to ſee Religion ſuffer the leaſt eccliſpe in any kind, in any place, to loſe any thing of that luſtre of purity, ſincerity or power, that once it had. Hence when the foundation of the Temple was laid, under *Zorobabel*, Gods people that had ſeen no better rejoyced in it: but the Prieſts, and *Levites*, and chief of the fathers, who were Ancient men, that had ſeen the firſt houſe, *they wept with a loud voice, while the reſt ſhouted for joy*(*b*).

Ezra. 3 12. why? O it grieved their hearts, to ſee how far ſhort that houſe, which God was now to have, came ſhort in beauty and glory, of that that God had had before in *Jeruſalem*. For as much then as it is every ones duty eſpecially the miniſters, to conſider the State of the Churches and eſpecially that of which they are members, and miniſters, to be affected with them, and to pray for them, and by all means to oppoſe the enemies thereof. And there is none of us, but ſtand in great need to be well grounded in theſe points that relate to the Church, leaſt we be ſeduced by the cunning and diligence of ſeducers, that are abroad in the world, and all our comfort will be augmented, if by the light of

of reaſon, and Gods word preached from ſuch Texts (as this I have read) we can prevent the Apoſtacy of any from the Church, and can diſcover the wickedneſs of thoſe that are dayly forſaking the Aſſemblies thereof. And it cannot but be matter of greateſt grief to the truly godly to ſee the ſolemne Aſſemblies neglected, or unfrequented, or private congregations erected in oppoſition unto them. All theſe particulars ſhew I have great reaſon to make choice of the Text and ſuch like unto it, till I have ſo fully diſcharged my duty and diſcovered the mind of God out of the Scriptures about it, that I may leave the forſaking of our Church aſſemblies inexcuſable, ſo that they can never plead Ignorance of their duty and ſin, and that I may ſay *liberavi animammeam*, I have delivered mine own ſoul. To this end and purpoſe have I pitched on the Text.

Not forſaking the Aſſembling of our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is.

For the coherence of the Text, I ſhall wiſh you to look no further back then the 22 *verſe*. For the Apoſtle having in the former part of the Chapter ſhewn them, that the Sacrifice of Chriſts body,

which he once offered, hath for ever taken away ſin. He preſſeth thence a double exhortation. The firſt in 22 verſe *let us draw near to God*, how? even in and through Chriſt, *with a true heart and full aſſurance of faith*, &c. And the Second is in the 23 verſe. *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering* : that is, this Doctrine of Chriſt ſacrificed and the merits thereof: The truth we have received from Chriſt, let us avow it, and not in time of tryal upon any condition forſake it. Now this exhortation he ſtrengtheneth, by giving of directions, for furthering their obedience thereunto: the firſt is, Chriſtans mutually ſtirring up, and ſharpening one another amongſt themſelves; that is a ſpecial help to conſtancy in the true Religion, and a preſervative againſt Apoſtacy, together with a godly ſtriving one with another, who ſhall be firſt in love and well-doing. verſ. 24. *Let us conſider one another to provoke to love and good works.* And,

2. Another means to this end, is the frequenting Chriſtian congregations & aſſemblies. So comes in my Text. *Not forſaking* &c. In the words you have evidently two parts.

1. Duty. A

2. A Taxation of ſome for the neglect of that duty.

1. The duty is to keep cloſe to, and not to forſake the Aſſemblies of the Church.

2. The fault taxed in ſome amongſt them is, that in Schiſm, or pride, or purpoſe of Apoſtacie they withdrew themſelves from theſe Church aſſemblies, and ſo fell back again, or were in the way of falling back, to the open denial of Chriſt: for ſeparation from the true Church, or the Chriſtian ſociety of the faithful therein, is a remarkable ſin, tending to lead men by Schiſm to Apoſtacy, from the profeſſion of the true faith.

1. Of the duty of Chriſtians in order to their proving conſtant in the true Religion: even to keep cloſe unto, and not forſake the aſſemblies of the Church. The word for aſſemblies in the Text hath a very great emphaſis in it, it is a tricompoſite ἐπισυναγωγὴ the prepoſition ἐπὶ as both *Calvin* and *Hemingius* upon the place obſerve ſignifies *novam acceſſionem*, an increaſe or addition of ſome more members to a body congregated, And theſe were the converted Gentiles, that being converted to the faith became one with the Jews one and the ſame body of Chriſt. *Eſtius* obſerves,

obſerves, that becauſe the Apoſtle here writes to the Jewes, therefore, for the Chriſtian Aſſemblies he uſeth the word Synagogue, becauſe he would not vary from their phraſe or cuſtome of Speech any more then needs. But might it not be ſome private meetings? ſome ſeparate aſſemblies in a corner that he calls by this name, and here ſpeakes of? O no, Interpreters with one conſent, generally interpret it of the publique aſſemblies of the Church in ſuch publique places, as are by Chriſtian Magiſtrates, or by the Rulers of the Church, if the Magiſtrates be not Chriſtian, appointed for the publique worſhip of God. *Not forſaking the Aſſembling of themſelves*, that is, ſaith the *London Annotations* the publique congregation of the faithful, wherein the word of God is taught, the ſacraments adminiſtred, and common prayer and publique Thankſgiving are offered up unto God; for unto ſuch publique congregations hath God promiſed his bleſſing: where hath he promiſed it? Marke, the Scriptures quoted by the Aſſembly for it are theſe (d) *one thing have I deſired of the Lord that I might dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the dayes of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his holy*

(d) Pſal. 27. 4.

holy Temple; for herein is implyed this promiſe, that in the Temple, the houſe of God, there will God let us ſee his beauty. Another text quoted by them is (e) *I was glad, when they ſaid let us go into the houſe of the Lord, our feet ſhall ſtand within thy gates, O* Jeruſalem, *thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the teſtimony of* Iſrael *to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.* Of ſuch aſſemblies therefore, even of ſuch as go into the ſaid Houſe of God, whither the tribes, the Multitude of the right worſhippers of God, go up to pray unto, and praiſe him, of theſe doth our Text ſpeak. *Not forſakeing the aſſembling* &c. And to theſe Aſſemblies the *Annotations* quote that ſpecial promiſe, as belonging unto them (f) *Where two or three are met together in my name,* that is, for prayer and other Religious offices, there am I in the midſt of them. Chriſt promiſeth his gracious aſſiſtance to, and preſence with his Church be it great and numerous, or be it ſmall, and with the publique and ſolemn congregation thereof. Yes, ſay the Schiſmaticks, where ever two or three are met together there is he in the midſt of them, therefore the promiſe is to us, or any of the Saints, wherever, or how few ſoever they be

e Pſal. 122. 1.

f Mat. 18. 20.

be that thus meet together. There is no Text wherein the ſeparatiſt take Sanctuary more then this, but very unſoundly. For as the Reverend Mr. *Ball* expounds that place (in his tryal of the grounds tending to ſeparation) *pag* 280, by the contextit appears Chriſt is there ſpeaking of the Validity of the ſentence of excommunication, and certainly Chriſts meaning is not that every Soeiety that conſiſteth of two or three believers met together to pray or preach, have the power to excommunicate: for no one example can be Alledged out of Scripture or Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory of the ancient Churches, wherein any number of the Faithful, did ever lawfully excommunicate or judg any Member of their Society, without their Guides and lawful Officers, moderateing the action. There is no promiſe can be ſhewed out of Holy Writ, wherein any ſuch authority is bequeathed to two or three private Believers, Diſciples or Brethren. O, no, but the very tenour of the words is to argue from the leſs to the greater thus, If Chriſt be preſent with two or three gathered together in his name to ask things agreable to his will, he will much more confirm in heaven what ever his officers and ſervants that have power from Chriſt

to

to do this service in the Church in his name shall determine and conclude according to his will: but they cannot meet together in his name, for this or any other holy office, that meet together in way of Schism, contrary to his will. *Quomodo possunt duo aut tres in nomine, Christi colligi quos constat à Christo & ab ejus Ecclesiâ seperant*, saith S. *Ciprian*, how can they be met together in the name of Christ that do manifestly separate themselves from Christ and his Church. *Cum Hæreses & Schismata nata sint, dum conventicula sibi diversa constituunt veritatis caput & originem reliquerunt*, when Heresies and Schismes arise, & the maintainers of them make separate conventicles for themselves, they forsake Christ the Lord and fountain of Truth & peace. It is the Church and they that keep within the pale of the Chuch by unity and concord to whom this promise runs to give them, what, they meet together in his name to ask of him, and to be in the midst of them *I will be*, saith he, *in the midst of them*, That is, of them that fear me, and keep my precept of peace and truth, *Non homines ab ecclesia dividit, qui fecit, & instituit ecclesiam, sed exprobrans discordiam perfidis, & fidelibus pacem suâ voce commendans, ostendit magis esse sè cum duobus aut tribus unanimitèr orantibus quàm cum decedentibus pluribus*

pluribus, pluſque impetrari poſſe paucorum concordi prece quàm diſcordi multorum oratione. Saith S. *Cyprian* (*g*) Surely our Saviour doth not by this promiſe, warrant diviſions from that Church, which he himſelf hath made and gathered, but rather upbraiding the contentions of the perfidious, and commending unity and unaminity to the faithful, he teacheth us that he will rather be with two or three of them met together with one accord in his name, and according to his appointment, then with multitudes of them that depart from them, and that he will rather anſwer the uniform prayers of a few peaceable believers, then the jarring prayers of many that divide themſelves into ſides and factions. Can they think that Chriſt will be in the midſt of them, that are met together out of the Church of Chriſt? Nay though ſuch ſhould ſuffer Martyrdome in the confeſſion of his name, yet cannot that blot and ſtain of their Schiſm be waſhed away in their blood, *Inexpiabilis & gravis culpa diſcordiæ nec paſſione purgatur*, the great and inexpiable fault of ſeparation and diſſention cannot be purged by the moſt bitter paſſion or ſuffering, *Eſſe martyr non poteſt qui in eccleſiâ non eſt*, he cannot be

De Unitate Eccleſiæ as I find him quoted by Doct. *Forbes* in his Irenicum.

be a true martyr that keeps not unity in the Church, *Ad regnum pervenire non poterit qui eam quæ regnatura eſt, derelinquit.* He cannot attain the Kingdome, that forſakes her, that muſt raign in it. It was peace that Chriſt gave us and bequeathed unto us. It is concord and unanimity that he hath commanded us. He hath ſtrictly injoyned us to keep the covenants of love and Charity pure and inviolate. So that he can never prove a right Martyr for the truth that keeps not Charity with the brethren.(*h*) *though I have faith ſo as to remove mountains, or beſtow all my goods upon the poor, or give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth nothing.* God himſelf is love, and therefore they that break the bond of love, can never have God. God cannot be in the midſt of them; ſo that it is not to private conventicles that this promiſe runs, but to the publique congregations of the Church of which my Text here ſpeaks. *Not forſakeing the Aſſembling of your ſelves as the manner of ſome is.* My way being thus clear and the meaning of the Text being thus made out and explained, I ſhall from what is ſaid, raiſe this obſervation and proſecute it.

(*h*) 1 Cor. 13 2.

Doct. *That it is the undoubted duty of all pious Chriſtians,*

Chriſtians, that deſire to prove conſtant to the true Religion to frequent and not to neglect the publique Aſſemblies of the Church. Which truth that I may prove undenyable and convince the judgments of all that are teachable, and will not ſtop their ears againſt the truth, I will proceed in theſe gradual propoſitions,

Prop. The Firſt ſhall be the furtheſt off, but the foundation of all the reſt, taken from the end of Religious Aſſemblies, even this, That God is to be worſhiped: Adorability is due and proper unto God. There is ſuch infinite abſolute perfection in the divine nature, as neceſſarily calls for religious worſhip at the creatures hands, with this truth our bleſſed Saviour repelled that great temptation of the Divel to fall down and worſhip him (*i*), *It is written thou ſhall worſhip the Lord thy God, and him onely ſhalt thou ſerve.* This worſhip is due unto God, and is due unto God only, for he alone is qualified with thoſe properties, and attributes, *omniſcience, omnipreſence omnipotence*, &c. that are neceſſary to make a being Adorable, & ſo with him no creature can claim a partner-ſhip in divine Adoration and religious worſhip, without great Sacriledg, nor can any be given to it, without

i Mat. 4. 10

out gross and abominable Idolatry? by this are the Papists therefore convinced of grievious Idolatry, in that they worship those things with a religious worship, which are no proper objects thereof; as Images, and Saints, and the like. But I onely name this Proposition, because it is alien from the Text, though the foundation of all that is to be said of it.

Those from whom this worship is due unto God, are all intelligent rational creatures, by the very obligation of nature. Indeed though there had never any been created by God to worship him, God had continued in his essential perfections as firm as ever. But being it was his good will to make the world, and rational creatures in it to adore him, there is therefore a natural obligation lying upon them, as his creatures, to worship him, and so, own their being, dependence, and preservation, as the product of their Creators goodness: what can be more just and equitable than for a depending being to adore the fountain of his being, and of his both present and future welfare? or what higher piece of unreasonable injustice can there be, then for the creatures to slight him from whom they drew life, & breath, and all? In a word God hath indued Angels, and men especially, with minds *Prop.*

and underſtandings for this very end, that they might know, honour, and adore him. He made all things, but them eſpecially for himſelf, to do homage to him, and therein lies their natural obligation to ſerve and worſhip him.

3. As for pure ſpiritual beings, ſuch as Angels are, they need not (being incorporeal) be circumſtantiated, either to time or place in rendring this actual worſhip to God.

1. They are not tyed to any time, ſtrictly ſo called, becauſe their very nature is meaſured by Eternity, and not by time; and, being of a ſpiritual nature, they have neither thoſe avocations, by any particular calling, nor neceſſary diverſions from Gods worſhip, as man, if he had continued innocent, muſt have had, for the very ſuſtaining of his life, and being, which would have been even in *Paradiſe*, by ordinary means, by ſeaſonable food. It is therefore Probable they have no ſet times, but continue conſtant in the immediate worſhip of God, unleſs when God applyes them as πνεύματα λειτουργικὰ, as his miniſtring ſpirits for the ſervice of his Church; and then perhaps their even then imployments, ſpeakes them only diſtant from the other Angels, their fellow worſhippers, and not abſent

absent from the real worship & service of God.

2. Thus it appears they are not limited to any place neither, as they are not to any limited time of worship; for they being Spirits are uncapable of any local circumscription: As for any further knowledge of the manner and circumstances of the Angels worshipping and adoreing of God, Scriptures have a deep silence concerning it, and it is a learned ignorance for us to sit down sattsfied and contented without the knowledge of that which God hath thought unnecessary to be revealed, indeed to inquire any further thereinto, may run us upon the rock of bold and unsafe conjectures in those matters, the knowledg of which we may well spare, without the least prejudice of our present comfort, or our future salvation So come we to the.

Though the Angels, being pure spiritual beings, are not yet, the sons of men (being of a mixt nature partly Spirit, and partly Body) by their very beings are determined both to time and place, in their rendring to actual worship unto God. The very same reasons that do evince a necessity of worship to be given unto God, by such creatures as are partly body and partly spirit, will inferr necessity of makeing time and place the inseperable adjuncts thereof. *Prop.* 4.

1. Nature dictates clearly, that ſome time is neceſſary to worſhip God in. For man, being part body, and part ſpirit, is naturally obliged to worſhip God with both external and internal worſhip; to glorifie God both with body and ſpirit, which are his (*a*). Now all, eſpecially external actions of man, muſt neceſſarily claim ſome time for the performance of them, nor can man conveniently ſet upon Gods worſhip unleſs ſome time be ſet a part, wherein he may be freed aud diſintangled, from his ordinary workes and inployments. Thus far time and worſhip ſeemes to fall under one and the ſame command; for as God in creating the world, did concreate time together with the world: ſo, when God commands any religious worſhip to be performed by men, he withal implicitely commands the neceſſary circumſtance of ſome time, wherein it may be performed, and it being highly rational, that the diſpoſal of that time ſhould be at the pleaſure of God, whoſe the worſhip is; therefore hath it pleaſed him to ſet a part ſome portion of our time, even a ſeventh part, when he might have required all, indulging us the reſt, even the ſix parts to be imployed according to the neceſſity of our nature. Such is Gods infinite goodneſs

a 1 Cor. 6. 20.

and

and condescention of love unto us, to allow us so large a portion of our time for our selves. And therefore they act most basely and disingeniously, not to say highly dishonourably against God, who grudge him so small a pitance, or who would rob him of it, or by worldly imployments or pleasures, drinking, or sports, or idleness prophane it.

2. Very light of nature also teacheth some place to be necessary for man to worship God in, because every body, such as man hath, must by the very necessity of its being, be contained in some real place, and indeed to be in a place, is so proper for a body, as we may as well suppose it not to have a being, as not to admit of a local circumscription; neither can a body be, nor exist, nor operate, nor perform any action, unless it be in some place, and therefore the worship of God being an external action necessarily require a place for it. So come I to the,

These a first proposition may be seen handled more largly by Dr. John *Stilling fleet in his Irenna.*

3. That worship that is due unto God from these rational Beings, the more publique it is the better it is: so you see I come near to the matter of my Text. *I* say the worship which is due unto God the more publique it is, the better it is, the greater and the more visible is the joynt concurrance and As-

Prop.

sembling together of several worshippers, for the performance of the same action of religious worship, the more acceptable it is to God. This appears by several considerations.

1. By Gods manifold precepts, both in the old and new Testament, injoyning several acts of publique worship; such were the commands of circumcision, and the solemne convocation, and ordinance of the Passeover, under the Law, their several feasts, and their sacrifices, with the infinite rites appertaining to them, and the sundry precepts for Baptism and the *Lords* Supper, and publique Prayers, and confessions unto *God*, and collections for the poor, those sacrifices well pleasing unto *God* under the *Gospel*. These and others are outward visible publique acts of divine worship, required by *God* himself.

2. By publique performing of worship to *God* we stir up and mutually inflame each others zeal and devotion unto *God*, and so the more publique religious worship is, the more acceptable it is unto *God*, in respect of others. S. *Austin* in his confession saith, *that he was almost ravished with the Songs and Prayers of the Church & Congregation*, so that the spiritual comfort, which he conceived by the sweet and heavenly

heavenly matter, which then the Christians joyntly and orderly made, and in their publique Assembles, made him weep for joy. And, I believe, there's scarce any Christian, but he hath sometimes felt his heart moved and affected towards God, in actions of publique worship, especially if uniformely and lively performed, more then at other times.

3. Publique worship is excellent, as publique, in respect of our selves, for our joyning in them is a badge of our profession; its a wearing of Gods livery; and confessing God before men, it shewes to all the world, that we are not ashamed to profess his word and Gospell, and our belief thereof, and obedience thereunto. And on the contrary our forsakeing the publique assemblies, wherein God is rightly and purely worshiped, borders upon a Apostacy, and is the next door to a denying of God, and our profession of Catholick Christianity.

4. It is excellent, as publique, in respect of God, for the more publique it is, the more it tends, to the honour and glory of God, being a publique testimony and acknowledgment of our dependence upon, and piety to him before all the world, as with the heart we believe, so with the mouth we make publique confession of God unto Salvation:

as we have light of grace within us, ſo hereby it ſhineth forth before men, that they may ſee our good works, and glorifie our Father in heaven Chriſt tells us that *a candle is not lighted to be put under a buſhel. Bono deletur manifeſtatio*, ſaith the Father, our good muſt be made manifeſt; therefore candles that have *bonum lucis* the goodneſs of light, muſt not be thruſt, *Sub malo tenebrarum*, under the evil of darkneſs; So that if the candle of light be in our ſoules, that is, if we inwardly worſhip God in our hearts and ſpirits, we muſt ſet it upon a candleſtick, our inward piety and worſhip muſt appear in our outward and publique worſhip of God before all the world.

5. The acception of publique worſhip with God above private, is *de facto*, notorious by manifeſt reaſon of the thing: particularly it is evident in publique prayer, for if the prayer of one righteous man can avail much, how much more will it when the prayers of many aſcends up to the Lord. This muſt needs offer violence to the Kingdome of heaven, and *the violent ſhall take it by force.* Surely in every congregation there are ſome truly righteous, and their preſence cannot but bring down mercies on thoſe others whoſe prayers for themſelves have no promiſe to be heard

heard *non æquè exoras quum ſolus Dminum obſecras*, ſaith the Father. Thou doeſt not ſo ſoon obtain thy deſire, when thou prayeſt alone, as when in the aſſemblies of the Brethren. for in thoſe Aſſemblies there is ſome thing more then prayers even the concord, and conſent, and joyning in Love and Charity, and the cry of the Prieſt, whoſe office it is, to make interceſſion for the people, and, being of the ſtronger ſize, to carry a long with them the weak prayers of the people, and carry then unto heaven, *Quod quis apud ſeipſum precatus accipere non poterit hoc cum multitudine precatus accipit. Quare? quia ſi non propria virtus tamen concordia multum poteſt.* The thing that a man cannot obtain by himſelf alone, praying together with the multitude he ſhall obtain, why? becauſe when his own worth cannot, yet the concord and union of the Aſſembly may avail much. It is no reproach to call the Churches Liturgy Common prayer, the more common it is the better it is, and the more effectual; when, not onely two or three but a whole Congregation are joyned, nay, all the Congregations of a whole nation do in the ſame words put their Common petitions and ſupplications, O what a ſhrill noiſe muſt this needs make in the ears of God. *St. Jerom* likened it to a thunder clap. St. *Baſil*

to

to the roaring of the Sea, it is like the ſeveral ſtrings of a Well tuned inſtrument that makes a raviſhing harmony, as the flame of one ſtick is nothing to that of a bundle on fire together, ſuch is the devotion of one man to that of a whole Aſſembly. *vis unita fortior*, force vnited is ſomuch the ſtronger, a three-fold cable is hardly broken. So do the joynt prayers of Gods people united, and publiquely put up unto God, move him as it were omnipotently and irreſiſtably, they mount up to heaven, they rap at the gates and cannot eaſily be denyed entrance, like as the petition of a whole Corporation is more avaliable to a King then the ſingle petition of any particular perſon ſuch is the power and profit of publique worſhip and devotion. And that by the way is a forceable argument to diſſwade the truely Religious from forſaking the aſſemblies, thats the fifth Propoſition, the more publique religious worſhip is, the better it is.

Prop. 6. The next in order is this. That divine worſhip may be truely publique. There is requiſite the free and full aſſembling of our ſelves together in a publique place, ſet a part for the ſame. So you ſee I come home to my Text, ſo ſet it home upon your judgments and conſciences with fulneſs of evidence, and ſtrength

strength of reason, as well as Holy Scripture. Give me leave to prosecute this Proposition by parts. To publique worship; to make it publique there is requisite the assembling of Minister and people in a publique place.

1. Of Minister. His presence is necessary, unless in case of unremoveable impediment, as some sudden sickness, or some weighty cause of absence; for he is a person set a part for the administration of *God*s publique worship, he is consecrated to draw nigh unto *God*, he is by office an Ambassador or Messenger between *God* and man. *Gods* mouth, an Ambassador to the people, appointed to *beseech them in Gods stead to be reconciled unto him*. And he is the peoples mouth and Ambassador unto *God*, to offer up their requests for grace and mercy unto him. *Gods* mouth to them in preaching, and their mouth unto *God* in prayer. Hence (*c*) the Priests are required to put up petitions and supplications. *Let the Priests, the Priest, of the Lord stand between the Porch and the Altar, and say spare thy people, good Lord spare them*, And as under the Law it was the Priests office to to burn incense, and *Uzziah* was smitten of *God* with a loathsome leprousie for usurping it. So still under the *Gospel* it is the Ministerial office to offer the Sacrifice of publique

(*c*) Joel. 2. 18

lique prayer unto God, which is as sweet smelling incense in the nostrils of God, and for preaching the word is expres, how shall they preach unless they be sent, (*d*) how able so ever they be to teach the word and sound doctrine, yet if they have not a mediate and ordinary call or sending, which though it be by man, yet is divine, as *Luther* saith *they cannot preach to your profit, they come not to edifie but to destroy.* They are *Luthers* words. Let no uncalled speaker, Beloved, have any encouragement at your hands, having no mission from God. Our Saviour tells you, that what shew soever they make of holiness, and spiritualness, and godliness, and saintship, and the like, yet they are wolves in sheep cloathing, thieves spoiling Gods heritage, deceitful workers, undermining the truth, therefore take heed of them, or forsaking the publique assemblies, to run after them to your perversion and distruction, such is the first requisite to a publique worship, the *Ministers*, the rightly called Ministers, presence in the Assembly.

(*d*) Rom. 10. 15.

2. That puplique worship may be publique indeed, the people ought to come and joyn in it, every one that would be saved must be member of the true Church for *extra ecclesiam nou est salus* out of the true Church and Religion, no man can find assurance of comfort

ſort and Salvation. *Japhet* cannot be ſaved until perſwaded to dwell in the tents of *Shem*, nor *Noahs* family out of the Ark. The viſible Church of Chriſt is a Congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments are duly adminiſtred according to all thoſe things that are neceſſarily requiſite for the ſame. A true Church is chiefly to be diſtinguiſhed from a falſe by purity and ſoundneſs of doctrine, and due adminiſtration of the Sacraments in it, And ſurely theſe are unqueſtionable in our Church of *England*, even in the confeſſion of our adverſaries, as it ſtands at this day reformed from the dreggs of Popery in its doctrine and worſhip. So then to this Church let every one joyn himſelf, and not ſeperate from it, if he would be ſaved (*e*) *The Lord added to the Church ſuch as ſhould be ſaved.* *Regia via.* The King of heavens high way to Salvation is, by adding to the Church not by ſeperating from it. If God be our Father the Church is our Mother. (*f*) Jeruſalem *which is above, is the mother of us all.* Hence the Church is oft called the Kingdome of heaven. (*g*) And that promiſe that is made (*h*) the people that dwells there, ſhall have their ſins forgiven, is to be underſtood of the catholick Church, and ſo by conſequence is applicable

e Acts 2. 47.

f Gal. 4. 26.

g Mat. 13. 44.

h Eſa. 33. 24.

plicable to every perticular viſible Church that is a viſible member of it. It is a damnable conceit of ſome, that a man may be ſavedinany religion. There is but one Faith, (*i*) one Way, one gate to life (*k*) And Gods promiſe is to call his Elect, that he will give them one heart and one way. (*l*) O then it ſtands men inſtead to conſider diligently, which is the true ſtanding Religion, and the true Church and every one muſt wait upon the Aſſemblies in that Church, that publique worſhip may be joyntly and publiquely offered unto God, all the people ought to come to the firſt part of worſhip, even the confeſſion of ſins; and to joyn therein, and in all the other parts of worſhip with the Miniſter, that they may be truely publique. Hence both the Jews and Gods People in all ages have underſtood themſelves bound in all their Liturgick ſervices to ſay *Amen* unanimouſly to the prayers and praiſes, they have put up to God. And we have cauſe to bleſs God that our publique worſhip in this nation is not (as the Papiſts would have it,) in a forreign language or ſtrange tongue, but in our own tongue, intelligible to all, ſo that all the people may underſtandingly joyn in every part thereof and ſay *Amen*. Its a priviledge this, other nations

(*i*) Ephe. 4 5. (*k*) Mat. 7. 13. (*l*) Jer. 32. 39.

tions want ; O that we would prize and improve it. So that's the second requisite to make worship publique, the peoples joyning unanimously with the Minister in it. These two make up the assembly, they are the persons that are to assemble, but where ? this brings in a third.

3. Requisite to make Gods worship truly publique even a place fit, and known, and set a part for that purpose. The assembling of our selves together must be in a publique place. God by his instituted Law, did particularize and set a part to his people some places for his publique worship, and service: *Paradise* it selfe was a place designed not only for innocent *Adam terram* but *Deum colere*, not onely to till the ground thereof, but also to worship God in it. And the place were *Adam* and his family had their residence after they was driven out of Paradise, was another place for worship, which when *Cain* Left he departed from the face of God *(m)*. And the Church of God being afterwards continued amongst the Patriarchs, they had their perticular places for worship also, though not solemn but occasional places onely : because they was alwayes in a flitting and unconstant state, but after the Israelites came out of *Egypt* then was their places punctually determined by God himself, As.

vide Dr. Io. Stillingfleet's *Phecinah.*

1. The

1. The Tabernacle where the Arke of the Covenant and the Altar was placed. There God promised to meet with his people, that worshipped him; hence it was called *the Tabernacle of the Congregation*, or *the Tabernacle of Meeting*, as being both the place of their meeting together and Gods meeting with them. (*n*) Now this place was fixed as the place of Jewish meeting, as being a type of Christ our *Mediator*, by whom alone, we being strangers unto God, became acceptable to him, it is he that by offering himselfe a sacrifice to God for us, hath made him a propitious Father to us, and by whose intercession all our prayers, and service, and worship are accepted. So the Legal worship being to be performed on the altar and before the ark in the Tabernacle, it did typically teach that neither our persons, nor performances nor any worship we give God, would ever be acceptable to him, unless it be presented in and by Christ who was typed by them.

n Exod. 29. 42. and 30. 36 nd Num. 17.4.

2. God commanded the Temple to be built for his publique worship, not that God would dwell in houses made with hands (*o*) but thus by way of condescension, he accommodated himself to his peoples capacity. That as a soveraign Monarch or Prince makes choice of some great City for his residence, so did

o Acts 7.48.

did the Lord of *Jerusalem*, which is called therefore the City of the great King. And as a Prince hath his palace in a great City, so would the Lord have his Temple within *Jerusalem*, which is therefore called the place of his habitation (*a*), The throne of his glory (*b*), The perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth (*c*), The place of his rest (*d*). Now the reason why God would have the portable Tabernacle erected by *Moses* to be changed by *Solomon*, into a most magnificent and stately Temple to be fixed at *Jerusalem*, it was to typify the heavenly Temple and Sanctuary into which Christ was to enter after his passion and resurrection, where we shall all appear before him to adore God in perfect peace for ever more. Then

a Ps. 76. 2.
b Je. 14 21.
c La. 2. 15.
d Ps. 132. 14.

3. There was also places for worship among the Jews besides not commanded but only approved by God. *viz.*, Their Synagogues, and Proseucha's, and places of prayer: for though they were to have but one altar and place for sacrifice which the Lord should chuse to place the ark of his covenant there, the Tabernacle or Temple, yet had they other places for devotion and religious use. Their Synagogues was covered buildings, like our Churches, their Proseuchas were a

plot of ground incompassed with a wall, or other inclosures like our Courts, open above, in these they pray'd onely, in these they interpreted the Scriptures also, in the Temple they both pray'd, and interpreted, and sacrificed also: The one was without the City (*e*). The other was within (*f*) *Moses* having in old time in every City them that preached him, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath day: their Proseucha's or place of prayer Mr. *Meade* makes as Ancient as the times of *Joshua* (*g*). But as for their Synagogues many Authors will have their Original fetch't no higher then the Babylonish Captivity, thinking that necessity first taught the Jews the use of them, which after their return they brought with them into their own Country. But *Aretius* and *Godwin* do more probably conjecture that for as much as the Jews were peculiarly ingaged to worship God, and that there was but one Temple for the whole Nation where at the Males only were bound to appear but thrice a year; and that an hundred miles distant from them that dwelt in remote places, therefore that they might not be left wholly destitute of places for their ordinary meeting for publique worship they built these Synagogues after they came into the promised

e Acts 16. 13
f Acts 15. 21
g Vid Diamb. in Josh. 24. 26.

promised Land. Sure it is they were in *David's* time, whence that place (*h*) *They have burnt up all the Synagogues of God in the Land*; and being called the Synagogues of God, we may gather thence that the Lord approved them, though he did not command them. So did our Saviour often frequenting them while he was in the flesh (*i*) both evidently testifying his real likeing of those publique performances of religious worship that were then celebrated, and tacitely approved the places themselves, where they were thus solemnly performed, thus you see there were these several places for publique worship under the Law. But what shall we now think of the time of the Gospel? Indeed our Saviour Christ hath removed all distinction of places through legal holiness, yet hath he still made ample provision for the authority of places for solemn assemblies for publique worship.

(*h*) Ps. 74. 8.

(*i*) Lu. 4. 16. 17. and 21.

1. The distinction of place through legal holiness is removed by Christ. The Tabernacle and Temple had a legal holiness and ceremonial Sanctity put upon them, because of the Arkes being there (*k*). There and only there they was to Sacrifice, without an extraordinary warrant to the contrary. As the Hebrews say a private Alter was not lawful to be erect-

(*k*) 2 Chro. 8 11. Exod. 29. 43.

ed, but by a Prophet; and when ever they prayed they was either to pray in the Tabernacle or Temple (*l*) or elſe towards the ſame (*m*), but that was for the thing typified by them, even Chriſt, through whom God accepts both of our perſons and prayers, and all our performances. It is in and through his *Mediation* onely that we call upon God. Therefore he the ſubſtance being come, the ſhadowes are vaniſhed. There is now no legal or ceremonial kind of holineſs in any place however conſecrated, to render any duties there performed more acceptable unto God then if performed by the ſame perſons in like manner in any other places. Divine worſhip under the Goſpel is not now tyed to any one place more than other, for any typical holineſs in them. The whole world is Gods univerſal, and as it were Church Cathedral, and ſo as we may pray at all times (*n*). So in all places (*o*) and he can and will hear us from heaven his habitation, which is conſtantly alike diſtant from us. That all diſtinction of places through ceremonial holineſs is aboliſhed our Saviour evidently teacheth in his diſcourſe with the woman of *Samaria* (*p*) ſhe asked him *in what place God was to be worſhiped, whether on* Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritan Temple

[l] Ex. 25. 14. Pſ. 99. 6.
[m] 2 Cor. 6. 38. 1 Kings 8. 44. Dan. 6. 10.
[n] 1 Theſ. 5. 17.
[o] 1 Tim. 2. 8.
[p] Joh. 4. 21. 22.

Temple was, *or Mount Moriah* whereon the Temple of *Solomon* was built: He anſwered her, *the hour cometh when ye ſhall neither in this mountain, nor in* Jeruſalem *worſhip the Father*, that is the publique worſhip of God ſhould not be reſtrained to any place for its ceremonial holineſs, as if it could render the parts of Divine ſervice more acceptable to God, than if performed elſe where, for the body of ceremonial worſhip was now to expire, and the partition wall to be taken down and God was to be worſhipped no more with Jewiſh ceremonies? but the Gentiles was to be admitted to be his worſhippers who together with the Jewes ſhould worſhip him in ſpirit and truth, and this the Prophet *Malachy* foretold (*q*) *from the riſing of the Sun to the going down of the Sam*, ſaith the Lord, *my name is great among the Gentiles and in every place incenſe ſhall be offered in my name*, All this then ſhews the vanity of the Popiſh Pilgrimages to this or that place, as being more holy, or to pray before this or that Saint or Image, or relike, or tuteler God thereof. Since all ſuch difference of place is abolished by Chriſt, So that whereſoever we be with *Jeremiah* in the Pit, or *Daniel* in the Lions denn, *Job* on the dung-hil, *Hezekiah* in his bed, the three Children in the

(q) Mal. 1. 11.

Furnace, *Jonah* in the Whales belly, with Christ in the Mountain, in the Desert, in the Garden, on the House top, or on the Sea shore, with *Paul* in the Prison: we may call upon God and he will hear us; thus on the one side we must hold this fast against the Papists, that all distinction of places is abolished. So that Christians may lawfully and acceptably worship God when and where their covenants direct them. Yet on the other hand be not deceived, as if there was no authority or excellency of some places for solemn Assemblies, for publique worship, still under the Gospel above others.

2. Though the ceremonial holiness, be extinct, yet are there some places holy, as separate, and dedicate from a common to holy uses, though our Temples be not, as the Temple of *Jerusalem* was, parts of our worship of God, nor tipes of Christ body, nor are we bound to set our faces towards them when we pray, yet is it written (r) *my house shall be called the house of prayer to all nations.* The Saints meeting and Assembling there to pray, makes it be called the house of prayer, so the Assembly Sanctifies the place, and not the place the Assembly, as the Temple did, seeing, as I said

(r) Esa 56. 7.

before

before we are body as well as spirit, therefore very light of Nature teacheth us, that convenient places for Assembling for publique worship, are necessary, and those places capacious for many, that must joyn therein. And although in case of Persecution of Religion the meanest place is acceptable; yet when God is pleased to give his Church Kings to be nursing fathers, to allow publique places consecrated for publique worship, with what thankfulness then should we repair to them, which many of our Christian Brethren in the world would purchase with their whole estates and dearest blood. When God give rest and quietness to his Church from the ten famous Persecutions, wherein they were glad to Assemble not in the fittest but safest places, perhaps in Dens and Caves of the earth, I say, when God gave her rest from them, then did they immediately erect Oratories for publique prayers, not sumptuous and stately, which could not then be possible by reason of the Churches poverty, nor plausible in respect to the worlds envie: but after when God was pleased to convert Kings to the Faith then was Temples and Churches presently built; and in building them no cost was spared, and nothing counted to dear

that was ſpent about them, Sacrilegious wretches are not in theſe times more deſirous to pull down, than thoſe devout profeſſors of Chriſtianity was to ſet up Churches. Thus did popular conſent and the Magiſtrates civil Sanction deſign theſe places for publique worſhip, ſeperating them unto it and prevailing cuſtome hath ſtyled them Churches. Nay ſo did S. *Paul* himſelf (s) what is it then but arrant madneſs and ſottiſh Ignorance; in our Quakers to boaſt ſo much of the light within them, and yet to be in ſuch darkneſs? Its contrary to the very light of nature, to decry and forſake the places ſet a part for religious worſhip, the neceſſity whereof for publique Aſſemblies is ſo evident even by natural light. How much better did the poor *Heathens* improve their natural dictates, than theſe pretenders to the light within, who from the ſight of the neceſſity of ſome convenient place for publique worſhip invented their Groves, and Oratories, and Temples for the ſervice of their Idol *Gods*, ſo then from all theſe conſiderations. *Gods* own ſetting a part places for publique Aſſemblies, under the law, and before it his approving thoſe that his people did ſet a part, the authority that ſuch places have by the very

(s) 1 Cor 11 18. 20. 22. and 34 compared.

very light of nature, as well as by Scripture, and the practice of the universal Church, though without placeing any ceremonial holiness in them. I conclude that Divine worship may be truly Publique which as publique is so acceptable unto God, there is requisite as publique persons Ministers and People to Assemble in it, so also a publique place consecrated for the same, from which excellent consideration ascend we to an higher, which is in the very Text.

Prop. 7. The most Solemn and publique Assemblies of the Church in these publique places, are greatly to be esteemed and constantly to be frequented of all the faithful members of the same, in the negative (*not forsaking*) must needs be implyed the affirmative to frequent them. It is a truth this, evidently following from those I have delivered. For if God is to be worshipped by all rationall beings, and that must needs be in some place in respect of our bodily parts, and that more publique it is done the better it is, and that it be publiquely done it is necessary there be an Assembly of Minister and People, Pastor and Flock in a publique place, then is it evidently necessary that such assemblies be frequented by all, in order to the discharge of this debt

debt of nature, the worſhip of God. Indeed to this we are obliged.

1. By ſelfe intereſt, becauſe of the great bleſſing we may juſtly look for from God, upon his Ordinances in the publique aſſemblies, and that more than in any private meetings whatſoever; for to the Church aſſemblies is that rightly applyed (*t*), the Lord loves the gates of *Zion* above all the habitations of *Jacob* (*v*). That ſpecial part of divine worſhip Prayer, is compared to ſeeking a thing loſt, and knocking at a gate we deſire to enter into, and ſure when many ſeek a thing together there is more hope of their finding it; when many knock together at heaven-gates they will be ſooner heard. Hence Gods people to ſhew an extraordinary deſire to prevail with God in their prayers upon extraordinary occaſions, they was wont to be extraordinary careful, that their Aſſemblies might be as publique as might be (*w*). *Blow the trumpet in Zion ſanctifie a Faſt call a ſolemn Aſſembly* (x), *Gather the people, Aſſemble the children.* As if he ſhould ſay leave none out. So *Jehoſhaphat* (*y*) Proclaimed a Faſt throughout all *Judah* (*z*). *all* Judah *ſtood before the Lord with their young ones, wives, and children, and* (*a*) *all the children of* Iſrael *went up and all the*

t Pſa 87.2.
u Mat. 7.7.
The whole duty of man
w Joel. 2. 15.
x verſe. 16.
y 2 Chr. 20.
z verſe. 13.
a Ju. 20. 26.

the People came into the house of God, when they were to fight with Benjamin and then they prevailed. For this cause also was *Hezekiah* so careful togather so solemn an assembly to keep the Passeover (*b*)

2. It's as necessary, this for others good, for every man, especially Parents and Masters, frequenting the publique Assemblies, may do much good by their example. *David* was much comforted in seeing the peoples forwardness in going to Gods house. (*c*) Multitudes doubtless go astray and forsake the holy Assemblies, by seeing others of better rank and quality doing so before them: and on the contrary many would keep close unto them, if the better sort would but more conscionably frequent them. Hence *Solomon* made his Scaffold in the Temple; even in the midst of the Court, *even that all the people might see him* (*d*), and of King *Joash* it is said, when *Athalia* came into the Temple *he stood by the Pillar as the manner was* (*e*). So it is said of *Josiah* also (*f*); and therefore God did require that the Prince should not onely joyn with the people inpublique worship, and come in, when they come in, and go out, when they go out, but also should be in the midst of them, that they might all see him, and so take good example

b 2 Chr. 30. 2, 1.

c Ps. 122. 1.

d 2 Ch 11. 13.

e 2 Kings 11 24.

f 2 Kings 23. 2.

example by him. And as to give good example to others, ſo that we our ſelves may partake of the fellowſhip and preſence of Gods people that aſſemble there. For as every godly man loveth all ſuch as fear God (*g*), and delighteth in their Company, (*h*) *I am a companion to all them that fear thee and keep thy Commandement*,) So doth he take moſt comfort in their company when they meet together in their aſſemblies to ſerve God. In the life to come, it ſhall be a great part of our happineſs to meet together with all the faithful, and to ſtand in the aſſemblies of the righteous, as may appear by that obſervation of the Appoſtle (*i*). *we beſeech you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and by our gathering together unto him.* And by the Prophets ſpeech (*k*) *ſinners ſhall not ſtand in the congregation of the righteous.* And now we have ſome reſemblance and foretaſt of that comfort in our meeting together with Gods people in the Church aſſemblies here. For by their preſents and fellowſhip, Gods grace is both confirmed and nouriſhed, and increaſed in us (*l*), as Iron ſharpeneth Iron, ſo a man ſharpeneth the countenance of his friend, hence when the Brethren met *Paul* at *Apii Forum*, he praiſed God and took cou-

g Pſ. 15. 4.
h Pſal. 119. 36.
i 2 Theſ. 2. 1.
k Pſal. 1. 5.
l Pr. 27. 17.

rage

rage. It revived his spirit to meet with them (*m*), so in respect of the example we are to give others, and that sweetness of having fellowship with Gods people, we have cause to esteem highly and frequent the Assemblies of the Church. *m* Acts. 28. 15.

3. That tenderness that is due to Gods honour and glory obligeth every conscionable Christian hereunto: as well as his care to give good example, and own his benefit. For the more publique the assembly is wherein we worship and the better it is frequented, the more is God glorifyed before all the world. And the more solemn is the profession which we make of that duty and homage which we owe unto him: upon this account it is required of great ones (*n*) *to worship the Lord in the Sanctuary, that so they might give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.* Hence *David* vowed, *he would give thanks unto the Lord in the great congregation, and praise him among much people.* And *Hezekiah* resolved to go up to the house of the Lord the third day, so soon as ever he was recovered. (*o*) Indeed we cannot better professe our religion, and homage and obedience unto God, our love and thankfulness unto him for all his mercies, than by diligent frequenting the most solemn *n* Ps 29. 12. Ps. 35. 18. *o* 2 Kin. 20. 8.

Assemblies

Aſſemblies of his Church; hence the Profeſſors of the true religion are expreſſed by
p Lev. 26. 2. theſe two things, (p) *ye ſhall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my Sanctuary.* Nay I add

4. To frequent them is not only our duty but priviledge alſo, it is one of the greateſt mercies we enjoy on earth that we can have liberty to go to the houſe of God publiquely to Aſſemble in them to worſhip him there, and ſhould we not then chearfully frequent them? There was nothing I am ſure that *David* deſired more in the time of his baniſhment, than this liberty, and no-
q Pſ. 27. 4. thing in which he rejoyced more, when he had it (q) *unicum* one thing, *only one thing have I deſired of the Lord, and that I ſhall require, even that I may dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the*
r Pſa. 42. 1. 2. *beauty of the Lord, and to viſit his holy Temple.* (r) *As the Hart panteth for the rivers of water, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God. My ſoul thirſteth for God, even for the living God, when ſhall I come and appear before the preſence of God!* and verſe 4. *He ſaith that his ſoul languiſhed when he conſidered, that had it not been for the tyranny of his enemies he might have gone with the reſt of the aſſembly into the houſe*
s Pſa. 84. 1, &c. *of God;* and (s) in a kind of abrupt affection he breaks out. *O Lord of hoſts how amiable*

are

are thy Tabernacles, my soul longeth, yea, and fainteth that I might come into the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cryes out for the living God, and verse the third he seems to envy the Sparrowes and Swallowes, that had liberty to lay their young where he had no accesse; and then he cryes out abruptly with a wonderful pathetical exclamation, *O thine altars Jehova, my King and my God*, And in the three next verses he pronounceth them happy? not onely that dwells in the Lords house to praise him, but that hath but liberty to come to the Church, though it were with a long and tedious journey, through thick and thin, through the Valley of *Baca* the rain filling the pools. Yea, he prefers a day spent in Gods house before a thousand elsewhere, and the meanest room and most contemptible office, a door keepers place, before the highest in the tents of wickedness. *David* was deeply Sensible, you see, how great a priviledge the liberty of Gods house is. And it is observable to the same purpose, when *Hezekiah* upon his prayer had his sentence of death revoked, in what terms Gods goodness is declared, *behold I have healed thee, and the third day thou shall go up to the house of the Lord* (t) intimating how special a faviour it was that he should have health

(t) 2 Kings 20. 5.

health and strength, so shortly to go to the worship of God, in the house of God: yea, the Scriptures plainly teacheth us, that though God be every where present (u) *do not I fill heaven and earth saith the Lord, the most high dwelleth not in Temples made with hands, he is not confined in them* (x): yet, is he in special sort in the congregation and Assemblies of his people. And sure that shewes it a great priviledge to be in Gods presence, as the Queen of *Sheba* thought *Solomons* servants happy that stood before him. Now Gods publique worship is called the face and presence of God. (y) Hence when *Cain* was for his murder banished from the place where his Parents and their families met together for the worship of God, as *Piscator* interprets the place (z) It is said *he went out from the presence of God.* And *David* desired *to behold in the house of the Lord, the beauty of the Lord* (a), and he said, *we will wait for thy loving kindness, O Lord in the midst of thy Temple* (b) And the place of Gods worship under the Law was called *Bethel*, Gods house, and the glorious Sanctuary (c), because the glory of the Lord filled it and sensibly appeared in it, in the Tabernacle (d) and in the Temple, and (e) *Zion* is called the habitation of Gods house; and the place where his honour dwelleth

u Jer. 23. 24 See this largely demonstrated in Dr Stillingfleets, Sherinah

x Acts 7. 48.

y Ps. 105. 4. and 42. 2.

z Gen. 4. 14.

a Ps. 27. 4.

b Ps. 48. 9.

c Ps. 26. 2.

d Ex 40, 34

e 1 Kings. 8. 12

f Ps. 26. 8.

And Gods presence is no less in our Christian assemblies, for so runs the promise (*a*) *where two or three are met together in my name there am I in the midst of them.* Hence S. *John* saw him walking in the midst of the seven golden Candlesticks (*b*). And the assemblies of Gods people under the Gospel may as well be called glorious, because the glory of the Lord appears in them also, though not so sensibly, yet no less comfortably and effectually, as is plain by that comparison the Apostle makes, between the ministery & worship of God that was under the Law; and this that is under the Gospel; preferring this for glory and excellency far above the other (*c*). yea, and as effects of this presence of God; O consider, what benefits are injoyed in these assemblies, even matters of that worth that the very Angels themselves desired to stoop down to behold (*d*), that most comfortable and precious treasure of Gods holy word, the ministry of reconciliation, (*e*) the preaching of the word, which is the door of Faith, (*f*) that ordinance of God by which his Saints are gathered, and the body of Christ edified; (*g*) that powerful means by which Satan is made to fall from heaven like lightning (*h*), and his strongest holds are beaten down in us (*i*), that key of knowledge (*k*)

(*a*) Mat. 18. 20.
(*b*) Rev. 1. 13
(*c*) 2 Cor. 3 8. 9. 10.
(*d*) 1 Pet. 1. 12
(*e*) 2 Cor. 5 18.
(*f*) Act. 14. 27.
(*g*) Eph. 4. 12.
(*h*) Luk. 10. 18.
(*i*) 2 Cor. 10. 4.
(*k*) Acts 20. 27.

by which is opened unto us the whole coun-
[l] Rom. 4. 11. ſel of God (*l*), thoſe Sacraments which are ſeals of the righteouſneſs which is by
[m] Pſal. 65. 2. Faith (*m*), thoſe Monuments of Gods exceeding love unto us in Jeſus Chriſt, thoſe ſeals of the kingdome, thoſe feaſts for our ſouls of fat things full of marrow, thoſe exerciſes of common prayer and praiſing God in their proper places. that houſe of prayer, praiſe, waiting for God
[n] Heb. 1 14. in *Sion*. (*n*) O what priviledges are theſe! inеſtimable unutterable; had I the tongue of men and Angels I could not ſet it out ſufficiently. Such cauſe have we to love Gods houſe, and to frequent and highly to eſteem the aſſemblies of the Saints in it and we are ſenſual, *Sottiſh*, Fooliſh, above meaſure, if we do not frequent and eſteem them. Nay as there is a ſpecial promiſe of Gods preſence in ſuch publick aſſemblies ſo of *Gods* ſpecial protection of them, of which the Angels are ſpecial miniſters. For as they have a charge from *God* to mi-
[o] Pſal. 34. 7. niſter and do ſervice to *Gods* people (*o*) and to pitch their tents about them when they aſſemble to ſerve the Lord. Hence under the Law, the Curtains that the Tabernacles were made of was full of cheru-
[p] Ex. 25. 1. bims (*p*) with the figures of them; the walls of *Solomons* Temple were carved

round

round about. *q*, both which typified the presence & attendance of the holy Angels upon the whole Church & Body of Gods people, as at all other times and in all other places, so especially at their Church assemblies; but see a full promise of protection to them, (*r*) read it. Hence *David* gives this for one reason (*s*) why he, so highly esteemed Gods tabernacles, for saith he, *the Lord is a Sun and a Shield unto us, and* (*t*) *in time of trouble he will hide us in his Pavilion*, and in this respect they that are excluded from the Church assemblies are said to be delivered up to Satan, unto his power and will, and men plac't under Gods, protection no longer. Therefore it concerns us to frequent the publick assemblies of Gods people, both out of self love, and for the good we may reap by others fellowship, and for others good, and for Gods glory, and for the excellency of the privileges in having liberty of Gods house, we have all the reason in the World, to frequent, and highly to esteem them above any private meetings, that seek to overturn them, or our estimation of them. Now from all that hath been said there naturally issueth an.

q 1 Kings 5. 29

r Esay 33. 20, 21.

s Psal. 84. 11.

t Psal. 27. 5

u 1 Cor. 5. 5

Eighth *Proposition* which is in *Prop. 8.*

the very letter of my text, That it is a very ſinful thing in any member of a true Church to ſeparate from, and forſake thoſe holy and publick Aſſemblies, *not forſakeing the Aſſembling of your ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is.* That it is ſinful appears ſufficienly by what is ſaid, as it is a meanes of making the worſhip of God leſs acceptable, of giveing evil examples to others, of abateing of Gods Glory, of deſpight or contemning ſo excellent a priviledge, of depriving your own ſoules of the fruition of Gods preſence, and of ſo great bleſſings flowing from it, the word rightly taught, the Sacrament purely adminiſtrated, which ſhould nouriſh and refreſh your ſoules, and ſtrengthen your faith, and confirm your aſſurance of Gods love in Chriſt. The Churches prayers and ſo of that bleſſing which our joynt prayers might bring down with a full meaſure upon us. Of the praiſes thereof, and ſo that chearfulneſs and reviving of ſpirit which we might enjoy, by having fellowſhip in thoſe ſpiritual ſongs where Gods people do ſing of his righteouſneſs of all theſe benefits men wilfully deprive themſelves, that forſake the Aſſembling together in Gods houſe. And how-

however some men may fooliſnly imagine, that they can do well enough with the private uſe of the words though they injoy not the publick, and can pray well enough by themſelves though they have no ſociety with the general and publick devotions. Yet is it ſure on the contrary, that there is no ſuch promiſe made to the private as to the publick. Nay, none at all to the private if the publick be neglected, or contemned. Such a woeful thing it is, for men to do themſelves the greateſt injury that can be, to deprive themſelves of *Gods* preſence by forſakeing the aſſemblies of his people; upon this ground Gods people complained of the effect of the rage and fury of their enemies; (*t*) *They razed the ſanctuary to the ground, defiled the dwelling place of Gods name, and burnt up all the Synagogues of God in the land,* And *Jeremiah* in his Lamentations (*u*) *The waies of* Zion *lament, becauſe no man cometh to the ſolemn feaſts, all her gates are deſolate.* And hence the ſentence of excomuuication hath ever by religious ſoules been accounted, the greateſt of puniſhments, as caſting them out of Gods preſence and giving them up to Satan (*x*) ſo ſottiſh are they that willfully excommunicate themſelves by forſakeing the aſſemblies. It is like

tPſal. 47. 7.

uLam. 1. 4.

x2 Cor. 5. 5.

a mans being outlawed in matters of civil Government, by which he is deprived of all the benefits and protection, belonging to a ſubject of the realm. Juſt ſo doth this cenſure put them out of the priviledges of Chriſtians and our of Gods protection for a time, ſo as to be reckoned as ſtrangers or forraigners, as heathens and publicans (y) The ſin of theſe men will beſt be diſcovered if we paſs from this eighth propoſition to the ſecond General in the Text.

y Matt. 18. 17.

2. The Apoſtles taxation of ſome for this ſin of forſaking the Aſſemblies, and ſo putting themſelves in a way of apoſtacy, or falling back from, or wavering in the profeſſion of the true faith; for ſo the Text runs, *not forſaking the Aſſembling your ſelves together as the manner of ſome is.* So then in the Apoſtles judgment thoſe ſome; whoever they be, are blame worthy, and are to be reproved, and ſharply rebuked what motives ſoever they may have for forſaking the publick Aſſemblies of the true Church, they cannot forſake them and be innocent, it is an act that cannot be acceptable unto God, *not forſaking the Aſſembling of your ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is.* As there are diverſe perſons that forſake the aſſemblies: So are their motives to forſake them different, ſome give one account thereof, and ſome another

ther all blame worthy. Let us but consider and weigh the Apollogies and motives of some of them.

1. The manner of some is to forsake the assemblies upon pretence of some corruptions in them. It is holyness and purity these men pretend to in a high measure, and therefore they forsake our assemblies, because as they affirm, they are unholy, being mixt assemblies, consisting of both good and bad, (*a*) a miscellany, Multitudes, of the seed of woman, and of the Serpent, and much more they inveigh and rail bitterly against them, and thence inferr a necessity of separation from them; (*z*) but that this is a most corrupt, and unsound inference will appear if we consider.

a vide Robinsons *and Cart's books.*

z Heb. 12. 14.

1. That the purest Church on earth is not free; perfectly free from all corruptions: The spouse of Christ is comly yet black. It becomes Christs Church to be as true, so humble, far from arrogating perfection. For any Church on this side heaven to say that she is absolute, and neither wants nor abounds, were the voice of *Laodicea*; or *Tyrus* in the *Prophet*. As there is no Element which is not through many mixtures departed from its first

ſimplicity, ſo is there no Church that breatheth in ſo pure an air, but it may juſtly complain of ſome thick and unwholſome evaporations, of ſin and error in it. Was not the *Church* typed by *Noahs* Ark: wherein was unclean as well as clean beaſts? doth not Chriſt compare it to a feild wherein grows both tares and wheat promiſcuouſly until the harveſt: (*a*) to a great houſe wherein are veſſels of Gold and Silver, and of Braſs earth and clay; (*b*) to a ſheep fould wherin are foulded both ſheep and Goats; (*c*) to a company of Virgins all invited by an external call to the Wedding, whereof ſome were fooliſh, ſome wiſe; (*d*) to an orchard or vineyard; (*e*) wherein all are not fruitful trees that bring forth their fruit in due ſeaſon. But on ſome God beſtowes digging, and dunging unto them, and fencing them, which cumber the ground and are good for nothing but to be caſt into the fire. To a vine in which are ſome branches that onely bear leaves of profeſſion, or at the beſt but ſowre grapes. Nay, ſometimes in a true Church, even the chiefeſt members for eminency and Authority are corrupted, ſometimes the prime Governours of a Church (as the chief Prieſts and Elders in our Savi-

a Mat. 13. 12.
b 2 Tim. 2. 20
c Matt. 25 32.
d Mat 25. 1
e Eſai 61 1.

Saviours time) may be great enemies of real goodneſs. Nay, to come cloſer to our ſelves,

2. We muſt acknowledge that even in our Church, and the Aſſemblies thereof there is ſuch general decay of that firſt love, and primitive piety which conſiſted chiefly in Humility, Mortification, Obedience, and good works, and ſuch a general increaſe of all filthy and abominable ſins, and thoſe too frequently uncenſured, unreproved that there is juſt cauſe for any Godly man to fear leaſt God be about to take away his tabernacle from amongſt us, and remove our candleſtick, and go far off from our ſanctuary, (*f*)

f Ezek. 8.6.

3. It is undoubted that when a pious Chriſtian conſiders theſe things he ought to be deeply affected with them, and neither communicate with a whole Church in any corruptions, that are evident corruptions in it, nor yet pertake in the ſins of any the particular members thereof: but obſerving his brothers prophanneſs, his duty is to admoniſh him, and to bewail his ſin, and do what lies in him to bring him to a reformation thereof. This is the right courſe, but

4. This is no ground at all for him to ſeparate from the Church, or to forſake the

the Aſſembly there of (it is of Mr. *Hilderſhams* Doctrines, agreable to the nineteenth Article of the Church of *England*) and that thoſe Aſſemblies that injoy the word and Doctrine of Salvation though they may have many corruptions remaining in them, yet they are to be acknowledged true Churches of God, and ſuch as none of the faithful may make ſeparation from, becauſe,

1. There was never Church on earth free from corruptions, either in the whole or in its perticular aſſemblies, and yet never did the Saints of God forſake them, upon that account. Never was there Church from the beginning of the world, to this day, from one ſide of the Earth to another, pure in all her members. *Adams* houſe that as the firſt Church on earth, yet did it contain *Cain* a bloody murder, as well as *Abel* a devout worſhiper in it. Preſently after did God raiſe up *Seth* inſtead of *Abel*, to be a holy ſeed unto him, and even then did not the Church continue long free from prophane mixtures, but the ſons of God became enamoured with the beatuy, and matched with the daughters of men. And ſo the deluge came upon them. Now from the deluge God preſerved *Noah* in the Ark; there was the Church again,

and

and behold, in that ark there was accurſed *Cham* as well as a bleſſed *Shem*. As alſo in *Abrahams* family, a ſcoffing *Iſmael* as well as a devout *Iſaac*. And in *Iſaacs* a prophane *Eſau* as well as an holy *Jacob*; And O what Scandals brook out among the Patriarchs! *Ruben* became inceſtuous. *Simeon* and *Levi* brethren in evil. After this, when the Church was inlarged into great congregations, and aſſemblies, O what impatient murmuring do we read of among the children of *Iſrael*, what foul Idolatries committed in the Wilderneſs, what ſerveing of *Baalim* time after time in the Land of *Canaan*, what horrible and ſcandalous ſins were committed amongſt them under the Judges? how was polygamy and unreaſonable devorces, and ſetting up high places in the daies of the beſt Kings? and what a deludge of prophaneneſs and Idollatry muſt you needs think there brake out in the worſt, when men did not onely ſin ſecretly but openly? they ſhewed their ſin as *Sodom*; when the Prieſts that ſhould have reſtrained them, led them on by evil examples; when the more holy were as ſignes and proverbs of reproach, and yet in all theſe ſucceſſive generations, we do not read of any ſepera-

perations from, or forſaking the Church aſſemblies, as the manner of ſome now is. Its true in Idolatrous times the Saints did refuſe to joyne with the ungodly in Idolatrous worſhip. So in *Ahabs* time there were ſeven thouſand that had not bowed their knee to *Baal* but yet never was the wicked (until convicted and cenſured) debarred from joyning with the Godly in the true worſhip, nor was the Godly ever enjoyned to ſeparate from them for fear of defilement by them. Nay, on the contrary we ſhall find that when our Saviour was born, then was the Church ſo corrupted that the Temple was become a den of thieves, and yet then *Joſeph* and *Mary* the parents of Chriſt did joyn themſelves to the congregation in Gods publick worſhip? Nay they went a long journey with their child Jeſus to ſatisfie the law to offer their turtle Doves and a pair of young Pigeons, and to take part with the Prieſts and Gods people in that which was good and for the reſt they meddled no further then their places required, an Example Saith *Calvin* and *Marlorat* expreſs againſt our Browniſts, and all our Separatiſts, and Recuſants, and that which may juſtly and finally ſtop their mouths

for

for ever might be this? if they would but consider how corrupt was the State of the Church in our Saviour's time, and yet how far forth our Saviour did communicate with them in the service of God not forsakeing the assemblies of the Church, though then so corrupt.

1. For the Priests and Teachers they were ignorant and unlearned; (*g*) Nay, wicked and ungodly (*h*) even the High priest himself did enter unlawfully into his calling, for whereas by Gods ordinance he was to hold that once during his life, it was bought and sold and made annual, which is imply'd in that expression (*i*) *Caiaphas was high priest for that year.*

g Matt. 23. 16. verse 3. *h* John 11. 44. *i* Luke 3. 28, 29.

2. Most of the people in most of the places, where our Saviour conversed were notoriously and obstinately wicked. He lived most in *Nazareth* and see what they were there; (*k*) *all that were in the Synagogue were fill'd with wrath, and rose up and thrust him out of the City, and led him to the edge of a hill to thrust him down headlong*, yea and all the Cities where most of his great works had been done he upbraided, *wo to thee* Corazin, *wo to thee* Bethsaida; (*l*) nor were the people of *Jerusalem* better. For when *Pilat* a Gentile

k Matt. 11. 20, 21.

of-

offered to releaſe him, all the multitude crying out at once, *not him but Barabas*; now *Barabas* was a robber (*m*). And when *Pilat* waſhed his hands proteſting for Chriſts innocency, they all ſaid deſperately *his blood be upon us and our children* (*n*), And for the worſhip it ſelf. that was uſed in our Saviours time, it was very corrupt.

m Luk. 23. 18.

n Mat. 27. 25.

1. They then urged the uſe of many ſuperſtitious ceremonies, more ſtrictly then the commandement, and ordinances of God (*o*).

o Mark. 7. 9.

2. They prophaned the Temple and made it a den of thieves.

3. They abuſed the Diſcipline and cenſures of the Church ſhameſully, (*p*) the Jewes decreed that if any one confeſſed that Jeſus was the Chriſt, he ſhould be excommunicated *ipſo facto*.

p Joh. 9. 22.

4. Their doctrine was corrupted in many points as theſe of divorce of theft, Murder, adultry (*q*). So corrupt was the Church then; and yet mark, our Saviour did not ſeparate from it, but communicated with the publick aſſemblies in the worſhip of God.

q Mat 5. 21. 28.

1. When an infant he was circumciſed, and by that Sacrament incorporated into that Church (*r*)

r Luk 2 21.

2. When

2. When his mother was purified, he was brought to the Temple, and preſented to the Lord with his offering as the cuſtome was (*f*). fLuk.2.22.

3. He often heard ſuch teachers, as taught in the Church (*t*) tLuk.2.46.

4. He was wont every Sabbath to joyn in publick prayer, with the Congregation that were at *Nazareth* (*u*). uLuk.4.16.

5. He received the Sacrament of Baptiſm in a congregation of that people. (*x*) When all the people were Baptized he was baptized alſo. xLuk.3.2.

6 He communicated in the paſſeover with the people, and the *Prieſt* (*y*). yJoh.2.13.

7. He allowed his Diſciples to hear thoſe teachers. (*z*) Nay, he commanded the Leper whom he cleanſed to go and ſhew himſelf to the *Prieſt*, and offer his gift in the Temple. (*a*) Neither did any of the Saints in any Age, nor Chriſt himſelf, nor his Diſciples ſeparate from, nor forſake the publick aſſemblies of the true Church, that enjoyed the word and doctrine of Salvation for any corruptions in them. Then theſe inſtances what can be ſaid more convincing, if men had ears to hear, what the ſpirit hath recorded of the Churches. The fore quoted Mr. zMat.23.12. aMat. 8.

Hilder-ham

Hildersham upon this point, hath two other reasons why we may not forsake them for their corruptions, who because he is of much authority with many dissenters, and I wish they were all of his sober spirit, therefore I will offer them to your consideration. *Valeant quantum valeer possent.* Indeed there is no cause to forsake them for their corruptions, because.

2. Notwithstanding such corruptions yet so long as God continues his word and doctrine of Salvation to a people, and in their assemblies, it is evident he dwells among them, and hath not forsaken them should men make themselves wiser or purer then God himself, to forsake those, assemblies which God hath not forsaken till God hath forsaken a Church sure no man may forsake it. So shall any man pretend to be holier and to hate corruptions more than the Lord, the holy one of *Israel*? Now you may see Gods promise to dwell among and not forsake his Church, where the word and true worship of God continues, (c) *I will set my tabernacle among you* (that is my Solemn worship whereof the tabernacle was a principal part) *and my Soul shall not abhor you, and I will walk among you, and I will be your God and*

c Leu 26. 11, 12.

and you shall be my people. In Judah *is God known, his Name is great in* Israel (a) *in* Salem *is his Tabernable and his dwelling place in* Sion. (a) Psal 76.

Object. But may not this Church (may some say) be guilty of such sins and corruptions as deserve that God should forsake it, and for which God in his word hath threatned that he will forsake it, although he hath hitherto dwelt therein.

Answ. True, but that is no sufficient warrant for any to separate from it, till it undoubtedly appear that God hath indeed forsaken it, and put in execution what he hath justly threatned against it. Though adultery (either in Man or Wife) give just cause of separation, he bond of wedlock being broken by it, yet till a Bill of divorcement do pass between them, they remain still Man and Wife notwithstanding that sin. So that the woman, whom her Husband had wronged, is called his Wife. (b) *Esau* had justly deserved to lose the prerogative of his birth right, and superiority over his Brother, when he had despised and sold it (c), and God had by his decree said of them, *the elder shall serve the younger.* (d) And *Saul* deserved to be deprived of his Kingdome. (b) Mat. 2. 15. (c) Gen. 25. 34. (d) Gen. 28. 23.

O yea

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yea, God had ſaid *that he had rejected him.*
e 1 Sam. 13. 14, and 15, 23, 26, 28. (e) yet till God ſaw it good to put his decree and oracle in execution, and actually to depoſe the one from his birth right, and the other from his Kingdome, *Jacob* acknowledged *Eſau* his Lord and Superior (f), and *David*, *Saul* (g): So though a
f Gen. 32. 4, 5.
g 1 Sam. 24. 7, 9. Church may be unworthy before God of the name of Chriſts Church, for the many corruptions that are in it, and the Lords threatnings are gone out againſt it, yet till God put this threat in execution, and actually take away his Tabernacle and worſhip from it, it is ſtill to be acknowledged and reverenced as the Church of Chriſt, and not to be forſaken by the members thereof.

3. Who is it that dare forſake and ſeparate from theſe aſſemblies; where men may be aſſured to find and attain to ſalvation; *Lord to whom ſhall we go, thou haſt the words of eternal life.* Accounting this a ſufficient reaſon why they might not leave
h Joh 6. 68. him (h), but men may be ſure to find and attain to ſalvation in ſuch aſſemblies, where the miniſtry of the word and the Doctrine of Salvation is continued and purely delivered. For the word and Doctrine of
i Heb. 2. 3. Chriſt is called Salvation (i). It is the ordinary

dinary means appointed by God to bring men to Salvation. (*k*) It is the incorruptable ſeed, at one time or other effectual in all Gods Elect that do injoy it, (*l*) it is the ingrafted word, which is able to ſave our ſouls. (Thus far Mr. *Hildersham.*) All the enemies of our Church cannot deny, but that both many have been and are ſtill ſaved in the boſome thereof. Nor can the malice of thoſe *Chams* that deſire to eſpy the nakedneſs of their Mother, and glories to diſcover them, ſhew one foundamental error with us, not one Hereſie whatſoever, how dare they then forſake our aſſemblies as their manner is? What though ſome others of your fellow members be guilty of ſins and errors, is that any prejudice to your ſalvation, if you partake not with them, but rather reprove them, and preſerve the true Faith and religion inviolate in your ſelves, although they by walking unworthy of their callings, and neglecting the conditions of the promiſes, do forfeit their part in the bleſſed priviledges thereof, and the things promiſed. Yet ſhall the promiſes be made good to you, if you be ſound members of the Church. Nor ſhall it prove any prejudice to your ſalvation, that you are mixed with the wicked

k Rom. 1. 16.
l 1 Cor. 1. 21
m James 1. 21.

in it: if you be not partakers of their sins. (n) *The wheat shall be gathered into the Lords Garner, and the Chaff shall be cast into the fire.* Hence the Apostle, (o) What if some did not believe? shall their unbeleif make the Faith of God of no effect, sure it cannot and therefore being there is no Church on earth free from all corruptions, no not in its Chiefest members; being that Saints in their several ages did not forsake the Church because of corruptions in them, being our Saviour hath left us his own practice for an incomparable example, being God himself forsakes not such Churches, and Salvation may be had in them, and the prophaneness of the ungodly is no prejudice to the Salvation of the godly members of the Church. Then surely it is a sin in separating from our Church assemblies upon the pretence of some Corruptions in them. Who, however they usurp the Title of Saints and Godly, and Puritanes, and Christ Kingdome, and Spiritual, and the like, yet S. *Jude* (p) markes them with a black coal, *These be they who separate themselves*, saith he, *sensual having not the Spirit.* Our Christian duty is to mourn for, and shew our dislike unto what evil we see in the

n Mat. 3. 12.

o Rom. 3. 3.

Church

Church or in our fellow members. So did the Faithful before the captivity; (q) ſo did Chriſt (r) *We muſt wait upon God who will in his due time caſt his gold into the furnace, and puriſie it ſeven times, will file off the ruſt and come with his fan in his hand, and ſeparate the wheat from the tares at the day of particular and general judgment* * *Admonendi ſunt pii ut arripiant quod poſſunt, quod non poſſunt patienter ferant, ut cum dilectione & gemant & lugeant donec aut emendet Deus & corrigat, aut in meſſe eradicet zizanio & paleam ventilis.* But we may not ſeparate our ſelves from or forſake the aſſemblies thereof on this pretence, as the manner of ſome is.

q Ezek. 9. 4.
r Luke 19. 41.
* Aug. contra parmon lib. 3.

2. The manner of ſome is to forſake our aſſemblies upon pretence they diſlike the Paſtors and Miniſters thereof. Some this or other is a miſs in their own miniſter, and therefore they care not for hearing them, having itching ears, they hunt out, or up heap teachers to themſelves. To theſe men I ſhall firſt offer two or three things that directly tend to their better information, concerning their Obligation to their own Paſtor, and then I ſhall anſwer their complaints of him: and ſhew how groundleſs their forſakeing the ſolemn aſſemblies

is in this reſpect. The notes I ſhall give tending directly to your better information are Mr. *Hilderſhams* again, who I believe gives in them the ſence of all the old Nonconformiſts in this point, and if they be well weighed, I do believe they ſtartle thoſe of the Presbyterian perſwaſion, that ſeparate themſelves from our Church, or ſet up private meetings in time of publick worſhip, and conſequently in oppoſition to it. They are theſe.

1. Doubtleſs it is Gods own ordinance that every Paſtor ſhould have his own flock to attend upon and labour amongſt them, for ſo it is written (*ſ*) the Apoſtles ordained Elders in every congregation, ſo ſpeaks S. *Paul* to *Titus* (*t*) *for this cauſe left I thee in Creet that thou ſhouldeſt ordain Elders in every City, as I had appointed thee.*

(*ſ*) Acts 14. 23.

(*t*) Titus 2. 5.

2. By neceſſary conſequence from the former, it muſt needs be alike the ordinance of God, that every one of Gods people ſhould have a Paſtor of his own to depend upon, & attend unto. For the duty of Paſtor and People is relative and mutual, if the one be obliged by Gods ordinance to attend to a particular people, then is that particular people obliged, by the ſame ordinance to attend to their particular Paſtor. He may diſcharge

this

this duty indeed, though they be so head strong as not to submit to his ministry, though they will not hear, or be warned by him as their watchman, yet may he, by a Faithful fulfilling the work that he hath recieved of the Lord, deliver his own soul. but then all this while, they by their own perverseness may lose the benefit of his ministry, and by forsaking him deprive themselves of those holy warnings, and instructions, which he, from the Lord, prepareth for them, as the straying sheep doth of that inspection, and provision which his careful shepheard would have over it, had it continued in its just bounds, so that it is every ones duty by the ordinance of God, to expect the Law at his own Pastors mouth, To depend upon his ministry, and hear what the Lord shall speak to him. Yea, he is obliged to this even in order to his own benefit.

3. It is Gods ordinance also, (because requisite by good order in the Churches, which is Gods ordinance) that Christians should be distinguished & sorted into congregations, according to their dwellings that they that dwell next together should be of the same congregation, and assembly. The general equity of these rules shewes that it is Gods ordinance,

w 1 Cor 14. 33, and 40. *God is not the Author of confusion but of peace, as in all the Churches of the Saints. And let all things be done decently and in order*: the word *Parochia*, signifying parish doth evidently in its Element, denote a compass or circuit of Inhabitants dwelling next together, and so belonging to the same Congregation, this as it evidently took place for order sake amongst the Jewes, *Moses* being read to every particular Congregation in their particular Synagogues in every Church, every Sabbath day. *Acts* 15.21. So for the same same good Orders sake, which was the undoubted ordinance of God, the same is still on force under the Gospel. For St. *Paul* left *Titus* in *Creet* to ordain Elders in every City. So that they that lived together in the same town, was apparently to be under the charge of the same Pastor, and Elder. (x) *Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, &c.* (y)

x Titus 15.

y 1 Pet. 5.2. Stilling fleet Irenicum 353. & *Alii.*

4. Our Author while he with other moderate Dissenters, from the Church, have in some respects allowed mens leaving their own Pastors, to hear others better pleasing to them, yet have they so far acknowledged the evidence of the truth of these particulars shewing peoples obligation to their

their own Paſtors, that they taught it thus. That men might not ordinarily or uſually leave them, and when they leave them they muſt carfully approve their hearts to God, that they have no other ends in ſo doing, but their own ſound edification onely, and that they go to another Paſtor onely becauſe they find, they can profit more in knowledg or Faith or Sanctification, than by their own, they complain that many Chriſtians make choice of, and applaud, and admire ſome particular teachers without any judgment or diſcretion. That ſome admire another Paſtor rather then their own, becauſe he makes more oſtentation of eloquence, or reading, or learning, or ſuch like humane gifts. As the Corinthians did, preferring other teachers before St. *Paul* himſelf, becauſe he was rude in ſpeech. (*z*) And ſome onely leave their own Paſtors to go to others for variety ſake, they have itching ears, and ſo muſt have a heap of teachers (*a*), one teacher (let him have never ſuch excellent gifts) cannot pleaſe them long. And ſome preferrs others before their own, Paſtors, onely becauſe they ſhew more ſeeming zeal in their voice, and geſture, and Phraſe of ſpeech, and manner of delivery, though perhaps their teaching be

z 2 Cor. 11. 5, 6.

a 2 Tim. 4.

be nothing ſo powerful, wholeſome or fit to edifie their conſciences, as is the Doctrine of their own Paſtor. Theſe and other particulars they complain of which ſhewes that people are fickle and giddy headed and leave their own Paſtors for want of knowledge and judgment. So that whoever they be that leave them, muſt be ſure to approve themſelves to that God that ſearcheth the heart, that they do it not for any other ender upon any other account, but for better edification. Nay the Authors urge, that when a man leavs his own Paſtor go to another, though he doth it in uprightneſs of heart onely in a deſire to edifie himſelf. yet muſt he ſeek to do it with his own Paſtors good leave and conſent, & why? It is his unqueſtioned duty to acknowledge that by the ordinance of God he owes duty to him as to his ſuperior in things belonging to the ſoul. (*b*) *Know them that labour among you, and are overſeers in the Lord and admoniſh you: and eſteem them very highly in love for their work ſake.* Nay, he is bound to ſeek his Paſtors comfort and give him all good incouragement, that he may do the work of his miniſtry with joy & chearfulneſs according to the Apoſtles rule. *Obey them that have the rule over you and ſubmit*

b 1 Theſ. 5. 12.

c Heb. 13. 17.

your

your selves, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy & not with grief for that is unprofitable for you. See here what one of the best presbyterian Guides that ever this Church had, delivereth as sound Doctrine; & oppose these perticulars to Mr. *Baxters* late answer of *Toleration not to abused*: a book wherein are many strange & ill disgested conceits in my poor judgment, and the pretences of other Setters up of private assemblies: and see if they can have consistence and agreement: and observe that while this Pious Author allows mens going to another Pastor than their own for better edification, yet doth he evidently understand the settled Pastor of a neighbour Church, which makes the case quite different from mens present forsaking their own Pastors, to hear unsettled, intruding preachers, who whether they be lawfully called to that holy function, I am confident thousands are utterly ignorant, nor have any good grounds to think it. So that for as much as even these sober dissenters, which did plead for, or at all allowed mens ordinary leaving their own Pastors, to go to another, have yet allowed it with such cautions as these, that men must do it for no by end, but for their careful

better edification onely and muſt be very careful it be not for want of judgment in their choice, and it muſt be with their own Paſtors conſent, and as acknowledging his ſuperiority, over them, and their obligation unto him, and as ſeeking his joy, and comfort, and incouragement, and for as much as this their allowance, was only with relation to ſettled Paſtors; and if a man ſhould not, but with ſuch caution leave the Paſtor of his own Church, to hear the Paſtor of another Church, much leſs may he to hear an unknown, novel, corner intruder. *(d)* By this it appears how tender and nice a good conſcience ſhould be to do it, and what a horrible guilt of tranſgreſſing the very ordnance of God, there lyes upon the conſciences of moſt that forſake the aſſemblies, out of diſlike of their own Paſtours, and go to others: which particulers being ſo clearly laid down I come to ſhew how groundleſs theſe mens uſual complaints of their own Paſtors are. And that in theſe following Objections.

d vide in Hilderſham on John 4. 32. page 342

Object. 1. Concerning his life. It is lewd or Scandalous, ſo as they cannot look for benefit by his miniſtry.

Object. 2. His opinion it is dangerous, ſo as they fear to be perverted by him.

Object.

Object. 3. His gifts they are mean, ſo as they cannot hope for much good by him.

Object. 4. His carriage it is indiſcreet or intollerable, and not to be indured.

1. It is indeed the weightieſt prejudice many have againſt their Paſtors, ſo as to forſake the aſſembly for his ſake, when they can juſtly pretend his life is lewd or ſcandalous, and would you have us then bound up to his minſtry whoſe example is enough to undo us? muſt we needs hear him who hears not himſelf? muſt he guide us to heaven, who walks himſelf in the in the paths of hell? how can we credit his words who ſhews his own unbelief by his wicked life? who confutes his ſermons, by his practices? who pulls down with his life, what he builds up with his lips! will the Spirit lodge in his lips, in whoſe heart he hath no room? will the holy God make uſe of a prophane inſtrument? who can gather grapes of Thorns or figs of Thiſtles? how can we be bound to hear him, whoſe life is ſo lewd, or if we hear him what benefit can we hope for from him?

Anſ. I confeſs it is the moſt grievous compl aint

complaint this, that can be if it be juſt A wicked miniſter being of all men moſt odious and abominable. If the ſalt hath loſt its ſavor it is good for nothing but the dunghil, if the light of the world be darkneſs how great is that darkneſs. The *Urim* and *Thummim*, Purity of Doctrine and exemplarity of life are the two great requiſites in a Faithful miniſter of Chriſt, far be it from me to patronize or plead for any in whom there is a notorious defect of theſe, any ſuch enemy of Chriſt, or *Judas* like traytor to Chriſt, as every ſcandalous miniſter is. But yet may I oppoſe to this prejudice theſe neceſſary conſiderations.

1. From ſuch the pureſt Church upon earth cannot be free. And that,

1. By reaſon of that innate corruption that is in miniſters as well as in other men, Alas, they are but fleſh, tempered of the ſame clay with others, polluted with the ſame original corruptions, prone to the ſame vices, being Angels by office yet men by nature? to whom though God hath committed the heavenly treaſure, yet are theſe but earthly veſſels ſtill, as frail and weak as other men. And,

2. Be-

2. Being as prone to ſin as others, their temptions are far more then other mens. For Satan the common adverſary of all ſouls knows his greateſt advantage is in devouring thoſe that ſhould ſave mens ſouls. As the Syrians was commanded to fight eſpecially againſt the King of *Iſrael:* So do the devils chiefly combate with the Prieſts and Prophets of *Iſrael.* The pulling down of theſe pillars is to weaken or raiſe the whole building, the miſleading of theſe guides is the way to make all to ërr. The ſmiting of the ſhepheard is to ſcatter the flock; to lull a ſleep theſe watchmen is the way to ſurpriſe the whole army. Its Satans compendious way of deſtruction to preevert thoſe that ſhould convert others, to deform thoſe that ſhould reform others, ſo that they being as weak as others, and Satan grudging no pains continually to aſſault them, is it any wonder if they be after foiled? from ſuch therefore the pureſt Church on earth cannot be free.

2. When thy own Paſtor is ſuch, yet haſt thou reaſon to hear him, and no reaſon to forſake the publick aſſemblies for his lewdneſs like. The heathen *Seneca* could advife me *non quis loquitur, ſed quid,* not

ſo

so much to weigh who speaks as the matter spoken, and the Scripture warneth them not
e Jude 16. to *have mens persons in admiration*, (e) *nor to have the Faith of God with respect of per-*
f James 2. 1. *sons.* (f) Though an Angel from Heaven should bring an untruth, declare another Gospel, we ought to give no ear to him,
g Gal. 1. 8. *let him be accursed* (g) and though a divel from Hell should utter a truth, it is not to be rejected for his sake that speaks it. Truth is Gods where ever it grows. As a mine of Gold or silver is the Princes in whose ground soever it be found. It must be received for the love thereof, as truth, and for his sake who is the God of Truth,
NB. by whom soever it be spoken. †*Moses* learnt of the Heathen, *Jethro* his Father in Law, a plat-form, for the ordering the ma-
h Exod. 4. gistracy of *Israel*, (h) *Pharoah* learnt of his prisoner *Joseph* how to prevent a fa-
i Gen. 41. 41. mine in Egypt. (i) *Naaman* was instructled by his captive Damosel, where he might
k 2 Kings 5. get his Leprousy healed. (k) Old *Eli* was taught by the Child *Samuel*: (l) *Balaam* by
l 1 Sam. 1. his very Ass. It is true the liquor often tastes of the Cask, and the preachers personal loosness, may much weaken his strongest perswasions. Yet,

3. Consider by our Saviours parable,

it

it appears the ineffectualneſs of Gods word moſt what proceeds from the hearers own corruptions his unpreparedneſs, negligence, or obſtinate wickedneſs, the fault is not ſo much in the ſeed or ſower, as in the ſoil, the ground, that is either rocky, or thorny, or high way ſide; if it be Gods word it is good ſeed ever, and the Miniſter is but an Inſtrument, God is the principal Agent to make it fruitful. Paul *plants and* Apollo *waters but God by his Spirit gives the increaſe.* Now

4. Gods Spirit which breatheth where it liſteth, accompanies ſometimes not his holieſt miniſters with his ſaving operations, and ſometimes he worketh by the lewdeſt of them. Thence our Saviours admonition (*a*) *the Scribes and Phariſees* (thoſe wicked hypocrites) *they ſit in* Moſes *chair, all therefore what ever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do, but do not after their works, for they ſay and do not.* If there had been no good to be reaped by them becauſe of their perſonal wickedneſs, Chriſt would never have injoyned them to hear them. Had Saint *Paul* ſuppoſed that the Spirit of love would by no means concur with thoſe envious ones that preached Chriſt, to increaſe his bonds,

a Mat. 23. 3.

he would not have rejoyced that they preached him. (*b*) Nay, he ſuppoſeth, that it were poſſible, for a very caſt away to be an inſtrument of others ſalvation, when he ſaid *I keep under my body, leſt when I have preached unto others, I my ſelf ſhould be a caſt away*, (*c*)

(*b*) Phil. 1. 15, 16.

(*c*) 1 Cor. 9. 27.

5. Conſider, gifts may be where grace is not, edifying gifts for others benefits in him, who hath no ſanctifying grace for his own. *Judas* had gifts fit for the Apoſtolical function; thoſe that came to Chriſt could ſay, *Lord we have propheſied in thy name, and in thy name have caſt out divels.* the Scribes and Phariſes were learned men. As a lame man may with his crutch point out the right way to others, which he is not able to walk himſelf, and a crooked Taylor may make a ſuit fit for a ſtrait body, which cannot fit himſelf. And as wicked *Balaam* could make a clear propheſy of Chriſt (*d*), ſo may many edifie others, that are themſelves unſanctified: many have gone loaden with gifts to hell, God may uſe his talents to convert others, that is himſelf a ſtranger to the works of grace and converſion; if man have a competency of edifying gifts, approved by the Church, and ſo be lawfully

(*d*) Num. 24. 17.

ly called to the miniſtry, it concerns not us, that he want an effectual calling as a Chriſtian: we are to look to his call as a miniſter, not to his call as a Chriſtian: for ſhould the people ſtand upon their Paſtors inward calling to grace, they could never hear any in Faith; for how could they be ever certain of his effectual inward call, which is known to God alone; the faireſt ſhew may be but Hypocriſy, but the Lord alone knows them that are his *(e)*; if then thy miniſter be lawfully called, ſent, and ordained, thou muſt receive him, *receive a Prophet in the name of a Prophet*, yea, thou may warrantably hope for a bleſſing from him though a wicked man. Why, (e) 2 Tim. 2. 19.

6. Becauſe Gods ordinance, and his promiſed bleſſing upon it, depends not on mans, the inſtruments, holyneſs or wickedneſs. The promiſe is ſuſpended upon no ſuch condition, and will you bind God, where he hath not bound himſelf. May not waters make a Garden fruitful lighting upon a fit ſoile though conveyed by a Pipe of lead or wood, which gets no good it ſelf by all the waters it conveyes; may not good ſeed caſt into a good ſoil yield a good increaſe, though ſown by unwaſhen hands? had *Elias* refuſed meat from the

Ravens mouth, might not he have justly Starved? will a noble man refuse his pardon, because a mean peasant brings it from the King? the Papists may as well suspend the benefits of the Sacrament on the worthyness or intention of the minister, as we suspend the benefit of the word on the same, yet this we hold ridiculous and impious in the one, and why not in the other? if then the purest Church cannot be wholly free from wicked Ministers, and if thy Pastor be such, yet hast thou reason to hear him: and not refuse truth from his mouth; and the fault of the words ineffectualness is most what in the soil, and the Spirit being a free agent often accompanies the lewdist Ministers, and edifying gifts may be where sanctifying grace is not; and the ordinance is not suspended on the worth of the instrument, but only on the power and goodness of God whose it is, then is this prejudice no sufficient ground for men to forsake the publick assemblies for the Pastors sake, though he be loose, or wicked in his life. In this case indeed it becomes Christians to to be modest, and not to be apt to speak evil of him, as the manner is; should our tryal be at the peoples tribunal, I doubt very

very few Ministers would escape condemnation, but some or other fault would be found, as who is free? and that so aggravated, our moats made beams, our molehils mountains, that every one of us would find a censure severe enough, for either Lewd, or debaucht, or covetuous, or contentious or Idle, there is not a Pastor in all Gods Church, but he would have somewhat found a miss in him, and he must with the Apostle expect to pass through evil as well as good reports, through hard censures, and bitter revilings in this divided and corrupted age; but your brethren, I hope you'l otherwise learn Christ, do not like curst *Cham*; uncover your fathers nakedness, do not make your Pastors fault your cup talke, or his infirmities your pastime to rip them up or blazen them, rather pity them, as being inclined to the same corruptions with others, and exposed to a thousand more temptations, and pray for him: and by no means shut your ears against Gods word in his mouth. Look upon him as an instrument only by whom the *Spirit* may work. *Si bene vixerit proprium lucrum, si bene dixerit tuum tolle quod tuum*, saith St. *Austin*. If he live well it is Gods work and

his gain, if he ſpeak well it is thy advantage, take what is thine and be thankful. As for his wicked actions, thoſe happen through the divels malice and his frailty, curſe the divel, but pity the ſinner and pray for him, who is like to anſwer for it to his Judge, to ſtand or fall to his Maſter, but for his holy doctrine that is thy portion; refuſe not to hear it, conſider it, meditate of it, and practice it: So ſhall *God* bleſs it to thee, though it come from the lewdeſt Miniſter whatſoever: Elſe rejecting of it, thou muſt anſwer for it and be judged by it at the laſt day. That for the firſt motive, for this forſaking the aſſemblies, which, you ſee, is groundleſſe, the prejudice men have to their Paſtor concerning his life.

Obj. 2. Concerning his opinion. For ſo will ſome ſay would you have us bound to hear him who is popiſhly affected, or the next door, ſtrict in the Law, too canonical, nay, we fear ſuperſtitious, and ſo may mix the childrens bread with poyſon and miſlead us out of the right way; is it not dangerous to hear him.

Anſw. To this *I* oppoſe theſe conſiderations, was not *Elias*, *Jeremy*, *John Baptiſt*, Saint *Paul*, and our bleſſed Saviour (who

(who ſpake as never man ſpake) accounted peſtilent fellows, ring leaders of Sects, troublers of State, Deceivers of the people? how ſhould theſe inſtances warn you of ſlandering your Paſtor cauſeleſly, or concluding him erronious upon the malicious hear ſayes or ſurmiſes of thoſe that are not able to judge of the doctrine, whether it be of God or no. Yet ſuppoſe he be erronious, then muſt you conſider of what Nature his error is, for though all truths be pretious, yet are truths of different natures, ſome eſſential fundamental points, *de Fide*, of the faith once delivered to the Saints; ſome circumſtantial, ceremonial, indifferent; ſome are perſpicuouſly revealed in the Scriptures, wherein errors are damnable, ſome are more darkly revealed, of which wiſe and holy men in all ages have doubted; now if it be onely in circumſtantial and leſs neceſſary truths, wherein you diſlike your Paſtors opinions, then muſt not this difference of opinion, beget in you any heart burning, or alienation of affection, though you do *diſcentire*, think diverſly, yet ought you not *diſcordare*, diſagree, they that unwillingly differ in judgment, ought yet to be one in heart. The Spirit of God is promiſed to lead all his

choſen into all neceſſary truths, but not to all leſs eſſential diſſentions have in all ages been between great Clerks and holy *Saints*; contentions have even through *Satans* craft been cheriſhed in the Church, they are apt to diſagree on earth that ſhall meet in the ſame heaven. What remaines then but that love be ſtill kept on foot, and we all endeavour to avoid bitterneſs of contention about theſe things? to follow the truth in love. As in building *Solomons* Temple there was no noiſe heard of Ax or hammer (*f*); So in the ſpiritual building of the Church we ſhould not let any ſound of contention be heard among us, ſuch is the duty of both Paſtor and people; eſpecially it is the peoples duty to be ſo ware of Satans ſtratagems, which is to divide them from their Paſtor, if it be poſſible, as not to entertain any needleſs jealouſies or evil ſurmiſings, judge cautiouſly of your miniſter, if poſſible, Search the Scriptures as the *Bereans* did to ſee if what he delivers be agreeable to Gods word, and if you find of a truth, that he and you differ in opinion in things leſs neceſſary and material, your care muſt be to pare the Apple and leave the worm, and that which is eaten by it, take the good and leave

(*f*) 2 Kings 6. 7.

leave the bad, which directions being ſound and wholeſome, if they be obſerved; it will naturally follow that this is no ſufficient ground neither, for any to leave our Church aſſemblies, for any prejudice men have againſt their Paſtors opinion.

Obj. 3: The third prejudice is againſt their gifts, alaſs will ſome ſay our Miniſter though he be good and orthodox, yet is hê a very mean preacher: he is no Body for gifts, where ſuch or ſuch come in compariſons. His knowledge ſhallow, how can he inlighten us? he is no Orator, how can he work on our affections? or perſwade us? what good can we expect from his dry, ſapleſs, weak Sermons? or why ſhould we be bound to hear him, when we may have better, by whom we may profit more, to this I oppoſe theſe conſiderations.

Anſw. 1. There may be in Miniſters great difference of gifts, without any in equality at all, for which the one ſnould be preferred before the other. For he who is inferior to him thou admires, in one kind, may excell in another, perhaps in a kind more uſeful and benefical. The gifts of God to his Church are diſpenced in a marvellous great variety, ſo that there

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are scarce any two ministers but they differ in their gifts (*g*). There are diversity of gifts but the same Spirit. In the Body natural the eye seeth better, but the tongue uttereth better, if the whole body were eye what would it do for a tongue, Saint *Paul* had more learning and knowledge (*h*), being at *Lystra* stiled for his utterance *Mercury* or chief speaker (*i*); yet was not of that excellent presence as other Apostles were, *Barnabas* in comforting the afflicted excelled him, being therefore stiled the son of Consolation (*k*). *John* Baptist was excellent in terrifying secure sinners, (*l*) *he came in the spirit and power of* Elias, but our Saviour was milder, *not breaking the bruised reed nor quenching the smoking flax* (*m*). In liklyhood *Peter* did in some gifts excell the rest, to whom Christ gave in special charge to feed his Lambs (*n*). Yet in powerful reproving of sin and denouncing Gods judgments, *James* and *John* excelled him, being therefore styled *Boanerges*, Sons of thunder, so in the great diversity of his gifts, that is amongst ministers, yet each of them excelleth in their kind, one may have deeper matter, another a more eloquent mouth; one may be sweeter in comfort, another more

g 1 Cor. 12. 14.
h 1 Cor. 11.
i Acts 14. 11.
k Acts. 4. 36.
l Luk. 12. 17.
m Mat. 12. 20.
n Joh. 21. 15.

powers

powerful in reproof; one may be graceful in pulpit, another in private conference; one may be excellent in interpreting to increase knowledge, another in application to breed good affections in men (*o*). To one is given a word of wisdome by the Spirit, to another the utterance of knowledge by the same Spirit, one may excel in this gift, another in that, none in all. Now, (*o*) 1 Cor. 12. 8.

2. Consider this is the Lords doing, for the beauty and benefit of his Church: their different education, dilligence, or industry, is not all the cause of this diversity of gifts though it be one, Gods gift being now to be acquired in the use of these means, whence St. *Pauls* injunction to *Timothy* (*p*) *give attendance to reading*, &c. But it comes chiefly from Gods free disposition, *who distributed to every man severally, as he will* (*q*). And this (*p*) Tim 4. 13. (*q*) 1 Cor. 12. 11.

3. Makes much for Gods glory, and the benefit and beauty of his Church. For Gods glory, for the greatness of his wisdom and freedome of his grace shineth in this difference perspicuously, and for the Churches beauty and benefit: for flowers of divers bigness for colour and smell, do adorn a feild exceedingly with it's party

ty coloured coat, difference of voice, baſe, treble, tenor, and counter tenor, and difference of ſtrings in an Inſtrument tuned by a skilful Muſitian, make the muſick more melodious. So is difference of gifts an ornament to Gods Church. Yea, it is ſuitable to the peoples diſpoſition. For as in the uſe of ordinary food, all have not the ſame appetite nor like the ſame meat; hence God hath provided variety of creatures to fit every one, ſuch is his Infinite goodneſs to us; ſo in the Church, one people may profit moſt by one mans gifts, another by anothers. God hath different works, and therefore provides different workmen; nay, the ſame perſon may profit beſt in knowledge by one Miniſter, in memory by another, and in affection by another. In ſome audiences great and eloquent ſchollars are fitteſt, in others ſuch as can ſpeak to the capacity of babes and ideots. *Johns* gifts was meeteſt for ſome mens diſpoſition, he was an auſtere man, and came neither eating nor drinking; our Saviours fitteſt for others (*q*). He ſuited himſelf to publicans and ſinners. Nay, as this diverſity may ſuit to different diſpoſitions, So doth it ſerve to increaſe love and unity amongſt the ſervants of God, as letting you ſee they

(*q*) Matt. 11, 17, 19.

they have need one of another, and ſo cauſeth them mutually to eſteem each other. *The eye cannot ſay to the hand I have no need of thee, nor the head to the feet I have no need of you.* Thus doth it tend both to Gods glory, and exceedingly to the Churches beauty and benefit. 1 Cor. 12. 21.

4. Conſider his miniſtry, whom thou accounteſt meaneſt of, is Gods ordinance, as well as others to whom in gifts he is inferior (r). *The Lord gave to one of his ſervants five talents, and to another but two, and to another but one, and he that had but two talents and gained other two with them,* had the commendation of a good and faithful ſervant, as well as he that received five and gained five. There was a great difference between *Paul* and *Timothy*, the one aged the other a youth, the one profound, famous for labours, and ſucceſs in the Goſpel, the other not heard of yet, yet ſee what *Paul* ſaith of him (s). *If Timothy come ſee he may be with you without fear,* (take heed you wrong him not, diſgrace him not, ſee that you love and reverence him) *for he worketh the work of God, as I alſo do: let no man therefore deſpiſe him,* Timothy was ordained a Miniſter and therefore they was not to deſpiſe but reverence him (r) Matt. 25. 15. (s) 1 Cor. 16. 10, 11.

him, as if *Paul* himſelf was with them, becauſe he was Gods ordinance, and did the work of God as well as he. Suitable is that exhortation concerning other Miniſters. (t). *Have them in ſingular love for their works ſake.* The feet of all that bring the glad tidings of peace muſt be beautiful in our eyes. And on the other hand the contempt done to the meaneſt of Gods ſervants, reacheth to God himſelf (u). *He that deſpiſeth you deſpiſeth me.*

t Theſ. 5. 13.

u Luke. 10. 16.

5. Conſider Gods word ſhould be received not for his ſake that brings it, but for his ſake whoſe it is. Hence the Scribes and Phariſees ſitting in *Moſes* his chair, and teaching *Moſes* his doctrine, were to be reſpected though they were wicked Hypocrites. Gold and Silver is not of more value, out of an imbroydered cup then a leathern purſe, meat is as pleaſing to the palate, as wholſome to the body, out of a clean earthen veſſel, as out of a ſilver Platter, as a candle ſhines as bright in a wooden, as in a Golden candleſtick: why ſhould Gods word then, better worth than thouſands of Gold and ſilver, be leſs valued, or the heavenly Manna be diſreliſhed, or the light of our paths be obſcured, by the meanneſs of the miniſters that brings it?

Gods

Gods word is the ſame, of the ſame intrinſick worth, who ever the miniſter be, and ſo ſhould be eſteemed and received by us, who ever thy Paſtor be, if he be a true miniſter of Chriſt, and have ſufficient gifts, to qualifie him for the miniſtry, then mayeſt thou doubtleſs, profit by him, if the fault be not in thy ſelf (x). *The manifeſtation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, and ye may all prophecy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted* (y). The beſt Chriſtian that is may profit by the meaneſt of Gods ſervants. Even Saint *Paul* profeſſed that this was one cauſe why he ſo earneſtly deſired to come to the Romans, that he might receive ſome good, ſome increaſe of Faith even from them (z). And I am perſwaded there is never a Miniſter that is of the moſt excellent gifts (if he have a godly heart) but he can truly ſay that he never heard any faithful Miniſter in all his life, even the meaneſt, but he could deſcern ſome gifts in him, wanting in himſelf, and received ſome profit by him, ſaith Mr. *Hilderſham.*

x 1 Cor. 12.

y 1 Cor. 14. 31.

z Rom. 1. 12.

6. The fruit and profit, that is to be received by the miniſtry, depends not only or chiefly on the gifts of the Preacher but

but on the bleſſing of God upon his own ordinance; for Miniſters are but Miniſters by whom we believe, and God for his own Glory may give that bleſſing to the more unworthyeſt, he denies to the moſt excellent, that the glory may be intirely his own, and that his ſtrength may the more appear in the Miniſters weakneſs. He ſometimes cauſeth that which the world counts fooliſhneſs, to confound the wiſe, and the weaker to exceed the ſtronger, in efficacy and profitableneſs. Saint *Peter* did convert more at one ſermon than Chriſt himſelf, probably did in all his life, who is *Paul* who is *Apollo*? ſaith the Apoſtle, but Miniſters in whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. *I have planted* and Apollo *watered, but God gave the increaſe.* Such is the peoples duty then to depend upon God, for his bleſſing in his ordinance, rather than upon the gifts of the teacher. I may allude to that (*b*). *In the morning ſow thy ſeed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knoweſt not whether ſhall proſper either this or that,* ſo do thou hear one of Gods ſervants as well as another, at one time as well as at another, for thou knowſt not by whoſe miniſtry it is, nor what ſermon it is, by which

b 1 Cor. 3. 5, 6, 7, 8.

Eccl. 11. 6.

which God will be pleased to work upon thy heart. Indeed on the other hand it is not possible thou shouldst profit by thy Pastors ministration, if thou attend not, or attend with prejudice, or without reverence unto, or delight in it, not acknowledging Gods ordinance in it, or nor seeking Gods blessing upon it. If then there may be a great difference in Ministers gifts without inequality, if he whom thou thinkest meanest may excel in his kind, if the difference be from the Lord, and that in order to his own glory, and the Churches beauty and benefit, and the meanest be Gods ordinance as well as the best, and the word be to be esteemed for it own worth, and his sake whose it is, who ever be the minister publishing it. If thou may profit by the meanest, if the fault be not thy own, and the profit depends not on his gifts, but *Gods* blessing. Then though thou may rightly covet the best gifts, and bless God for them when thou injoyest them, yet mayest thou not despise the meanest of *Gods* Ministers nor despair of profit by him. Nor is this then a sufficient plea for forsaking the publick assemblies, the Pastors defects in gifts.

4. The last prejudice is from his car-

riage ſuppoſed to be indiſcreet perhaps intollerable. Its true will ſome ſay our Miniſters life is good, his opinions Orthodox, and his gifts excellent, but he behaves himſelf ſtrangely in his place. Either he is alwayes chiding, and reproving us, A meer *Boanerges*, a ſon of thunder, telling us oft of Hell and Damnation, as *Ahab* ſaid of *Micaiah*, prophecying concerning him ever evil, no good. This made *Felix* diſtaſte St. *Paul*, when he preached of temperance before him and *Druſilla*, who was moſt unchaſt, and of judgment before him an unjuſt judge; or perhaps he is ridged in keeping us to Church orders; he will not bear with us in what he diſlikes though it were his prudence to paſs by. To this loppoſe ſeveral conſiderations. I confeſs there may be indiſcretion in the beſt Paſtors. Its a difficult thing both to pleaſe men in wiſdome, and yet to ſave, and not betray their ſoules in faithfulneſs. Yet on the other hand it is ordinary for people to blame them that are faithful, for their faithfulneſs, under the notion of indiſcretion. Remember Gods ſtrict injunction to thoſe watch men of *Iſrael*, to cry aloud and not to ſpare, to warn men from the Lord in every evil

vil course, and that under pain of being guilty of the blood of their souls, that miscarry by their negligence. And if you consider this, how can you wonder if they be very tender of suffering any sin to lie upon you they observe unreproved, unreformed, if they fear Gods displeasure more then mans, and take heed least that you call discretion be not nicknamed so, being in truth Laodicean Lukewarmness or want of Zeal. Do but in the next place survey the generality of people in these dayes, how dull of hearing are some, how froward and untoward others, how nicely Hipocritical and tickle others, and how secure others, and it will seem almost impossible for a faithful Pastor to work on you to reformation, unless they speak more then discretion and modesty would almost permit.

Consider also if it be not better, the people be not reproved and kept awake, and at last saved through the Pastors reproofs and corrections, however deemed indiscreet, then muzzled in their sins. Is it not better a wholsome though smarting plaister be laid on, where need is, than that corruption should fester? doth not more souls perish by the Ministers luke-

warme coldneſs then indiſcretion? better are the faithful words of a friend, than the deceitful kiſſes of an enemy. It is bleſſed thunder if it do but awake men out of their ſins, you are much more beholdto your Paſtor for his plain dealing, and honeſt hearted reproofs, in faithfulneſs to God, and your ſouls, than if he ſhould flatter you in your ſins with *placentia* ſpeaking pleaſant things. All which particulers duely conſidered, do ſhew how groundleſs mens forſaking the aſſemblies is alſo, becauſe of the prejudice they too often cheriſh againſt his carriages andindiſcretion. Truth is, what ever men pretend, the root of all is ſecret malice againſt the Church miniſtry, bread and nouriſhed in their hearts, or at leaſt want of love, malice cannot judge well of any thing, that comes from him a man loves not, perverts his meaning, conſtrues wrong all his words and actions, ſuckes poyſon from that from which a diligent Bee would draw the ſweeteſt honey; in theſe dayes malice between Paſtors and People flames out hot, or at leaſt love is cold, and we know Chriſt bad his Apoſtles look for this entertainment in the world: and ſo we need not think it ſtrange, concerning this fiery tryal. He bad

bad them expect to be reviled and persecuted, and have all manner of evil spoken of them, telling them the Prophets of old had been so used before them (*a*). And Saint *Paul* saith of himself and his fellows that they found their Masters words true by experience, for they were reviled, persecuted, defamed, accounted the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things (*b*) And when God opened to him at *Ephesus* a large and effectual door. That is, blessed his ministry mightily, and gave it enterance into the hearts of men. Yet were there many adversaries raised up against him (*c*). Nay, it is made a kinde of marke of an unfaithful Minister not to be thus used (*d*). *Wo to you when all men speak well of you, for so did your father of the false Prophets* (e). *If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*, the reason is, what ever men pretend, it is a Ministers fidelity, and plainness and boldness in reproving mens sins; that's the prime cause of their hatred and malice against them; when *Jeremy* complained every one did curse him, though he had neither lent nor borrowed upon usury, he hints the cause in the next words, that he was a man of strife and contention with

a Mat. 5 10, 12.

b 1 Cor. 4 12-13.

c 1 Cor. 6, 9.

d Luke 6. 26.

e Gal. 1. 10.

f Jer. 15. 10. the whole earth (*f*). Ahab *hated* Michaiah, *becauſe he prophecyed not good concerning*
g 1 Kings 22. 8. *him, but evil* (*g*). The two witneſſes did vex and torment men by their miniſtry
h Rev. 11. 10. (*h*). Indeed this evil made *Moſes*, *Jeremy* and *Jonah* to find out ſo many excuſes, as fearing to enter upon this ſo hateful, and thankleſs a calling, and it tempts many good Miniſters either to give over the calling, if they can live without it, or at leaſt to be unfaithful in performing it, as breeding them ſo much hatred, and diſpleaſure with men. *I ſaid*, ſaith Jeremy,
Jer. 20 9. (*i*) *I will not make mention of him, nor ſpeak any more of his name: but his word was in my heart as burning fire ſhut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, I could not ſtay.*

Now for a remedy of this diſeaſe, oh that people would conſider, that near relation they ſtand in, and that dear affection they owe to their Miniſter, they are their fathers ſpiritual fathers begetting them to Chriſt. Paſtors, Shepheards, Watch-men, ſuch as muſt give an account. That they would conſider the ſtrict command of God for love thence under the Law the Prieſt was to carry in his garments the names of the twelve Tribes on his ſhoulders, to ſignifie

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the weighty burden he undertook; and in his breast plate, to shew his entire affection unto them, and this affection it is, that maketh Ministers faithful in their office to watch over their souls unwearyedly, to spend and to be spent, to win them to Christ. And so in spiritual regeneration, as in natural regeneration, it is love that begets Children unto Christ. And on the other hand the people should be as careful of love to their Ministers. Saint *Paul* records of the Galatians (*k*) That *they would have pluckt out their very eyes to have given them unto him*, far short of the Galatians are those that muzzle the mouths of the oxen that should tread out the corne. That abridge the hire of the labourer, and withhold the Churches right. The Galatians was willing to forsake the dearest things they had in the world, their very eyes, if not their life for the Gospels sake, and its ministry (*l*). *Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.* So I say consider what love is commanded by God from Ministers to their people, and people to their Ministers. But on the other hand see from whence all variance betwixt them comes, even from the Devils

(*k*) Gal. 4. 15.

(*l*) Gal. 6. 6.

craft, and malice, for no way hath he more effectual, to hinder the efficacy of the word then this. His five thouſand years experience hath taught him that it is to little purpoſe to mutter a ſyllable directly againſt Gods word, he ſees no likelyhood to beget in Chriſtians, eſpecially in Proteſtants, a direct hatred of the word as ſuch. His policy then directs him to work obliquely, to diſtil into mens hearts a hatred of their Miniſters, ſo to make them ſet at naught the word they preach. This is the devils craft. Now conſider laſtly how unreaſonable this is, what is the matter? Is there ſome petty quarrel betwixt you? wipe it of, are there ſome occaſions of diſaffections? look it be not cauſleſs, as for the moſt part they are. Do they reprove your ſins, drunkenneſs or ſacriledge, or perjury, or rebellions, or prophanations of Gods day or the like. Alaſs, they would not do it but *in* love to your ſouls, they would have your good will, and gladly be beloved of you if they durſt forbear, to pleaſe you, but neceſſity lies upon them to cry a loud and not to ſpare to tell *Judah* of her ſins, and *Iſrael* of her abominations, ſhould you not then rather love then hate them for this? and

ſay

ſay let the righteous ſmite me and it ſhall be a kindneſs, *for faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kiſſes of an enemy are deceitful* (*m*). All theſe conſiderations do bid you ſhake off anger, envy and deſpight by all means, not to entertain the leaſt ſeed thereof. No evil reports, no Idle accuſations againſt your Paſtor (*n*). But rather to pray for them to God, to deliver them from unreaſonable men (*o*). And as St. *Paul* ſpeakes of *Epaphroditus to receive them in the Lord with all gladneſs, and hold ſuch in reputation* (p). *Laying a ſide all malice and guile and evil ſpeaking, as new born babes deſire the ſincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby*, and then I dare ſay you will find no cauſe of forſaking the publick aſſemblies of the Church for your Paſtors ſake which was the ſecond grand motive we propounded to conſider, why, men are willful to forſake our Church aſſemblies as the manner of ſome is. Beſides theſe two grand occaſions of forſaking the aſſemblies, there be others we need not ſpeak ſo largely of, becauſe being but named, they cannot but be abhorred, and being ſeen they diſcover their own nakedneſs, ſuch are theſe following.

[m] Prov. 27, 6.

[n] 1 Tim. 5 19

[o] 2 Theſ. 3. 1.

[p] Phil. 2. 29,

I. Some

1. Some forſake the aſſemblies and ſeparate themſelves from us out of mear Ignorance, takeing offence at many things in our aſſemblies cauſeleſly, or without any weighty reaſon, they do not and are not able to diſtinguiſh between the eſſentials and circumſtantials in Religion, and ſo look upon any ſuppoſed miſtake in the latter, with deteſtation proper only to the perverſion of the former, and thence violate charity, and break communion with thoſe that hold the ſame faith with them. Theſe eager Spirits having a zeal without knowledg, blow up minute differences, with laſting contentions. They raiſe diſputes about a pin, or a nail of the Temple, that even endangers the whole fabrick, they ſet the ſame value upon the leaves and bark of the tree, as upon the fruit it ſelf, they make ado about a nail, or tile of the houſe, as if it were of the ſame concernment with a pillar or a beam, they look upon that as ſimply evil, which is onely ſo in ſome reſpects, as it is wrong circumſtantiated, or which is onely not perfect in all degrees, whereas did but men deliberately prize that which they oppoſe, and proportion their diſpleaſure to the juſt weight thereof,

their contentions would ſoon be calmed, and never become quarrells with the Church of God. Nay indeed in many it is meer ſottiſh Ignorance, that is the cauſe of their forſakeing the aſſemblies of the Church of God, they was never grounded in the firſt principles of the Oracles of God, and eſpecially they would never learn their obligation to the Church they was baptized in, to hold communion with it. Perhaps theſe men will ſay they would fain do right and go the right way but they would never hearken to their right guides, but gave their ears firſt to ſeducers, being a little too much affected with that ſhew of piety they ſaw in them, they put themſelves wholy upon their directions and examples, and ſo are carried hoodwinckt or blindfold into Schiſms and damnable errors. Thouſands there be that have ſeparated themſelves that are meer Ignorants, ſilly women eſpecially, *that was alwaies learning but never came to the knowledg of the truth*, having better affections than principles; whom, becauſe they would not receive the truth in the love thereof, God hath given up to ſtrong deluſions to believe lies; and ſo in ſome, thats one cauſe of their forſake-

in;

ing the aſſemblies, meer Ignorance.

2. This Ignorance is oftentimes proud or conceited. So thats another cauſe, damnable pride. The wiſeſt of men arraignes this vice as the ring-leader of diviſions (*q*). *Onely by pride cometh contention.* Indeed there are few ſins unto which pride is not either a parent or nurſe, but above all Schiſm and Hereſie, hath its immediate diſcent from it, having ſo many lineaments and features of this deformed mother, as ſufficiently atteſts its extraction. It is pride that makes ſome men diſlike whatſoever is not of their own invention, or whatever is impoſed by their ſuperiours, or whatever others have a hand in whom they contemn or hate, be it never ſo good or true, or what is contrary to that they have formerly maintained: and they are loth to deny themſelves, as in effect to acknowledge they was formerly in an error, and in the wrong. Its pride that make ſome deſire, to go in ſome ſingular way, and loath to go on in a beaten tract, wherein they may be obſcured in the throng? with *Theudas* they are ambitious to be ſome body, with *Simon Magus* to be μέγας τις. Some knowing or Zealous perſon, they would be taken notice

(*q*) Prov. 13 10.

See ſome of theſe heads very largely and learnedly diſcourſed of by the author of the whole duty of Man in the canſes of the Decayes of Chriſtianity, to whom I here acknowledg my ſelf much indebted.

tice of by their neighbours as a stricter sort of livers, and would be eminent though by the infamy of Schism or separation. To be called of men *Rabbi Rabbi*, is inchaunting musick to any Pharisee and the very essence and constitutive parts of a Schismatick is the esteem of himself and the contempt of others. I am not as this Publican, was the Pharisees voice, whose very name signifies separation, and our modern separatists do but eccho the same note, when they pronounce these Church assemblies, and the members thereof heretical or carnal, from whom they withdraw themselves, they say as those in *Esay* [r]Esa. 65. 5. *Stand of, come not near me, for I am holier then thou.* But let it be remembred that while the Pharisee lookt so fastidiently on the poor Publican, he renounc'd communion in prayers much more acceptable to God then his own, and the observation is truly applyable in our case. The Transcendant purity and Saintship and holiness, which our Separatists boasts of? being if brought to the touch but a more sublimated wickedness. And their pretence for spiritually, being onely verified in spiritual pride. By their fruits of rebellion, disobedience to, and contempt

tempt of Magiſtracy and Miniſtry, raſh cenſures, mallice, evil ſpeakings, and bitterneſs, headineſs, treaſons, high mindedneſs and the like fruits, you may know them. So this pride is another partition wall that Satan uſeth to divide us from God and one another, and to make men forſake the Aſſemblies of the Church.

3. It is the manner of ſome alſo to forſake them out of curioſity, this is that baneful weed, which the divel made ſhift to ſteal even into Paradiſe, which hath ever ſince affected the richeſt ſoils, the moſt pregnant underſtandings. I do not altogether mean that ſpeculative curioſity about the myſterious parts of our religion, though that be a notorious mean alſo to propagate Hereſies, when men will not be ſoberly wiſe, but will attempt to find out the depths of thoſe myſteries which God hath thought fit to make ſecret; prying into the Ark of the ſecret counſells of God. But that curioſity of men which is uſually about thoſe little trifling notions, and thin aerial ſpeculations, which do not at all tend to make men wiſer to ſalvation. Men are not content to know thoſe divine truths which tend

tend to Godly practice, therefore they think such preachers as insist of them, dry and insipid, and forsake them to follow those, who will offer them nicer speculations, be they never so unprofitable to the great end of Salvation (s). Besides there is another curiosity that is deep in the guilt of drawing men from the Assemblies, to which they belong. A curiosity to hear strange preachers, they have itching ears: their ordinary food do not please them, a new besome sweeps clean, an uncouth bit is for their palates, a Minister of the best gifts cannot please them long, as the Athenians were all for enquirng of news, so are these men all for novelties. In a short time, they distaste the ministry of their ordinary Pastors and so to please the distempered palates of their fickle souls, they must needs be gadding abroad, to hear every upstart Mountebank that is near them, and so this is one great reason of their forsakeing their ordinary assemblies, as the manner of many is.

(s) vide *The Decayes of Christianity in the causes of disputes.*

4. Another reason hereof is covetousness and interest, the great Idol to which the world bowes, as the Apostle saith, *they that will be rich fall into divers temptati-*

tations; ſo do they fall into this ſin among the reſt. Some men will be rich, therefore out of reſpect to their profit, they abſent themſelves from the Aſſemblies of the Church, they muſt needs ſpend ſome Sabbaths in going to Fairs, or going journeys, or making bargains, or meeting cuſtomers, or looking to ſome houſe buſineſs, they cannot get their living, they ſay, by coming to Church, and when they come they muſt needs leave a great part of their family behind them, for ſome worldly advantage or other. Theſe are like thoſe in Malachi (*t*) *That ſaid it is in vain to ſerve the Lord*, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances? And others there be in the world, that make a ſhow of religion and piety: that have no other end in their broaching and maintaining Schiſms and ſeparations from the aſſemblies of the Church, then their proper advantages. They make divinity an handmaid, religion a ſtalking horſe to a policy. *Jeroboam* made the Golden Calves become more venerable Deities, when he found them fit to ſerve his jealouſies, and *Matchiavels* policy, that ſtates and perſons ſhould ſecure themſelves of religion was a common practice, long before it was a rule

(*t*) Mal. 3. 14.

rule. In the Old Testament we read of mercenary Prophets that turned the office into a trade, that divined for money, and even for handfuls of Barley, and pieces of Bread. And in the New St. *Paul* speaks of deceivers *that speak things they ought not for filthy* Lucres *sake* (*u*). And the same Apostle declaiming against the love of money as the root of all evil, he reproves it from its having made men erre from the faith (*x*). And it is *St. Peters* prediction, that the most damnable Heresies, even the denying of the Lord that bought them, should be introduced by those, who through covetousness should make Merchandize of their Proselytes (*y*). And is it not plain how mens itching ears in this Age, do invite many Mountebanks in Religion, to try experiments upon them, when men Nauseats Old truths, and Old teachers because they are acquainted with them, and embrace Doctrines and broachers of them because they are new, when men love such teachers and are bountiful to none but such as they love, how can it be doubted but some will suit themselves to their disciples humours to gain money to themselves, when by sowing tares, they can immediately,

(*u*) Titus. 1. 11.
(*x*) 1 Tim. 6. 11.
(*y*) 2 Pet. 2. 13.

reap Gold? our age hath given us ſufficient experience hereof, would God that this way of diveliſh traffique were at an end. And doubtleſs as there be many leaders, ſo are there many Diſciples in the ſeparation, in whom covetouſneſs, and ſelf intereſt reigns exceedingly, and by it they are animated in their obſtinate continuance in their erronious waies, ſo as to ſtop their ears to the charmes of ſound doctrines, charme they never ſo wiſely. Now O that ſuch would conſider, what the character of infamy is, that remaines yet upon *Achan*, that he troubled *Iſrael* to inrich himſelfe. And on *Balaam*, that he not only loved the wayes of covetouſneſs, but enſnared the people in uncleanneſſes, and upon thoſe in the Goſpel, that made Gods houſe a houſe of Merchandize, and ſo a den of thieves. So that another ground and reaſon of mens forſaking, and propagating ſeparations from our publick aſſemblies. Covetouſneſs, ſelfe intereſt. I'le name a

5. Even Idleneſs, and this both ſpiritual and natural, ſpiritnal for becauſe many men will take no paines in the practiſe of the duties of godlineſs which might well imploy mens whole lives; therefore they fall into nice and new opinions to

imploy their active mindes. So *spiritual* Idleness in things in which they should be imployed makes men curious, and curiosity contentious. The zeal of practise of humility, and patience, and self denyal, and mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts, and renouncing the world and the other parts of real goodness, this zeal grows cold, and so that of disputes gets and gathers heat and vigor. Alass our good works in this age fall short of the first Christians, and then no wonder that our controversies exceeds theirs; because we spend not our time in the one, which is irksome to flesh and blood, and therefore we imploy it in hammering and forging the other. *Pharaoh* understood this well, though he applyed it ill, when he thought the *Israelites* propossals of travelling into the wilderness to their divotions, was the effect of their idleness, and so increast their taskes as the propereſt way to divert their design; and as spiritual Idleness, so also natural, is often the cause of division. For as experience sheweth such men as desert or neglect their secular callings, are most apt to run after new teachers; and with the widowes that neglected their office of Ministration, to be busibodies and in many families the

ſhe-zealots, neglecting their proper buſineſs, the guiding of the houſe, have therefore run into conventicles, and upon them have ſeducers acted their deſigns moſt, leading captive ſilly women to become duck coyes to whole families, beſides theſe there are another ſort of Idle perſons to, that can ſit at home, lurke by their fire ſides when they ſhould be in Gods houſe: and though they have little or nothing to hinder them, from attending his ordinance, yet any pretence, a ſhowr of rain, a ſore finger, an Aking head, a thin blaſt of weather will ſerve the turn to divert them. O that ſuch would remember *Hezekiahs* example, who with in three dayes after he had been ſick of a moſt painful and mortal diſeaſe went into the Temple (*a*). And the woman that on the ſabbath reſorted to the Synagogue, though ſhe had a ſpirit of infirmity eighteen yeares (*b*). Alaſs the cauſe is, mens hearts are dead, and void of grace, and the love of God and his word, and ſo they find little comfort, they take no delight in his publick worſhip, and therefore are glad of an excuſe. *David* loved Gods tabernacle well. For his heart and his fleſh rejoyced for the living God (*c*). Thoſe that taſt how ſweet the Lord is, will

a Eſa. 38.22.

b Luk. 13. 10, 11.

c Pſa 84.12

will deſire the ſincere milk of this word (*d*). O thou that art ſo careleſs whether ever thou appear in the aſſemblies of Gods Church in this life, thou haſt cauſe to fear thou ſhall never ſtand in the congregation of the righteous in the life to come (*e*). Thats a fifth cauſe of mens forſaking or abſenting from the aſſemblies as the manner of many is. d 1 Pet. 2. 2, 3. e Pſa. 1. 5.

6. There is a ſixth which I will name becauſe I will miſs none, and but name it, becauſe I have ſpoken in effect to it before. The manner of ſome is to forſake them, upon pretence, they can ſpend their time and ſerve God as well, pray and read good books at home as in the Church of God. But God loves the gates of *Sion* more then all the dwellings of *Jacob* (*f*). *David* ſure being both a prophet and a King could ſerve God as well in private as any pretenders, and he had both a prophet and a Prieſt with him in his banishment yet did he for all that long for the publick worſhip of God; bewailed the want of it exceedingly (*g*). f Pſal. 87. 2. g Pſal 84. 3.

But I have fully ſhown you before the excellency and acceptableneſs of publick worſhip perfonrmed by Godly miniſters together with his people in a publick place,

above any private whatſoever, that's a ſufficient conſideration to convince them of ſin, that forſake the aſſemblies upon this account, as the manner of ſome is.

Thus have I now both diſcovered the evident duty of all Chriſtians, and their obligation to frequent the publick aſſemblies in order to the publick worſhip of God, and the ſin of thoſe men, that either upon pretence of corruptions in the Church, though they acknowledg it Orthodox, and right in the ſubſtantials of religion, or of ſome faults in the miniſters life, or opinion, or gifts, or carriage, but in truth out of malice or hatred againſt him, or out of pride, or curioſity, or Idleneſs or upon pretence they can as well ſerve God at home, do neglect or forſake the publique aſſemblies. Now what remaines but a word of exhortation, to all that have an ear to hear what Gods Spirit ſaith unto the Churches, and members of them.

1. I beſeech you Beloved in the Lord, to learn to lay to heart your obligation to attend upon Church Aſſemblies: and beware of thoſe that endeavour the diviſions of the Church, or to divide and ſeparate you from it. It's the Apoſtles own earneſt ex-

exhortation, (*g*) *now I beseech you brethren mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the Doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.* They are no lovers of your souls as they pretend, they are no servants of God for your good, they are no fit guides for salvation, that for things meerly external, adiaphorous, & indifferent, matters of meer order or decency, separate themselves from the society of a true Church, and would have you so to do. As if a furious brainsick sailor should upon every occasion of anger or discontent, cast himself overboard, presuming to be safe enough out of the ship; the ordinary road way of Gods saving any soul is in the unity of the Church. And that is in a conjunction of them to some visible ordinary congregation according to that, (*h*) *the Lord added to the Church such as should be saved*, but *exceruntè nobis*, they who go out from amongst us, because they was never of us, as to their hearts, I will not presume to judge them as to their final state, yet this I'le say, that the Church being the Spouse of Christ, and Schism and *Heresie* being a work of the Flesh, an effect of so bad causes as I have shown you fully, ranked by the Apostle with fornication, and drunkenness, and adultery, and the like. I would

(*g*) Rom. 16 17.

(*h*) Act 2.47.

not dye in their state for all the world; take heed hereof then I beseech you.

2. But for Church Assemblies, I beseech you labour to love them and delight in them and be more thankful to God, for the liberty you have to frequent and enjoy them, than hitherto you have been. Consider the cloud of witnesses that is gone before you.

i Prov. 2. 20. (*i*) Walk in the way of good men and keep the way of the righteous. They have ever highly esteemed and diligently frequented the Assemblies of the Church. Christs Parents being poor dwelt far off *Jerusalem*, yet did they go up every year to the passeover, which was the most solemn Church Assembly, that Gods people in those dayes had. Behold a witness against them that pretend poverty for their excuse. The Apostles after Christs ascention were continually in the the Temple (*k*). And *Anna* the Prophetess, departed not from the Temple but served God, with prayers and fasting night and day (*l*). And the Primitive Christians continued dayly with one accord in Temple (*m*). Yea, our blessed Saviours custome was to the Synagogue every Sabbath day (*n*). And did constantly go to every passeover at *Jerusalem* (*o*). behold what witnesses you have against those that pretend they have knowledge

k Luke 24. 53.

l Luk. 2 37.

m Acts 2 46.

n Luke 4. 16

o Joh. 2, 13.

knowledge and grace enough, they have no need to go to Church, they canno profit by it, but can as well ſerve God at home. *Hezekiah* the King you ſee reſolved ſo ſoon as ever he recovered to go up to the Houſe of God (*p*). *David* loved *the habitation of Gods houſe, and the place were his honour dwelt* (*q*). He counted Gods Tabernacles amiable, his ſoul longed, nay fainted for them (*r*). He made it his choice to be a conſtant companion of them that feared God (*ſ*). He was glad when they ſaid unto him let us go up to the Houſe of God. Behold what witneſſes you have alſo againſt thoſe, that being great and rich, take ſtate upon them, and think it a kind of debaſement to be conſtant in attending Gods houſe and ſervice. Let us in the fear of God follow theſe excellent examples, and of what ever degree we be, poor or rich, wiſe or learned, let us never forſake the Aſſembles, or neglect them. If we do, we may eaſily provoke God to gives up to our own hearts luſts, or to hardneſs of Heart in ſin, or to the deluſion of *Satan* to believe his lies. And therefore let us prize the having oppertunities of attending Gods houſe. Let us count it one of the greateſt bleſſings that our candleſtick is not removed, nor

[p] Eſai. 38. 32.

[q] Pſal. 26. 8.

[r] Pſal. 84. 12.

[ſ] Pſal. 119. 63.

is

is there a famine of the word in our daies, nor is it perſecuted, but that we may ſecurely and openly worſhip God in our Churches, and Temples, and not, as our miſerable fore fathers, be glad to do it in hills and holes, in Dens and Caves of the earth. Let us labour to walke worthy of this bleſſing while we enjoy it; and to benefit by it, leſt we provoke God continually till he be weary of long ſuffering: and ſo he at length deſtroy his Tabernacle, as a garden, and lay waſt our congregations (*t*) Let it be our daily prayer for the continuance of our ſolemn aſſemblies, both here and in all places of our divided land (*u*). pray for the peace of *Jeruſalem*, *They ſhall proſper that love thee.* Thus let us do, every one, our ſelves.

t Lam. 2. 6.

u Pſal. 122. 6.

3. Nay, let us, according to the latter part of the verſe, wherein our text is. Let us exhort one another hereunto; let every one call upon his neighbors, and friends, and draw them to frequent the Church aſſemblies when the Lord had prophecied, (*x*) *That in the dayes of the Goſpel, all nations ſhould flow unto the houſe of the Lord*, he addeth (*y*) that by this means it ſhould be done. *Many people ſhall*

x Eſa. 2, 2.

y ver 3.

ſhall go and ſay: come let us go up to the houſe of God. Eſpecially let Maſters of Families, and Parents be exhorted, not to think it ſufficient to come to Gods houſe themſelves, but ſee that their Children and ſervants come alſo. A Godly Chriſtian cannot be content, that they ſhould attend him in his houſe, that will not attend and go with him to Gods houſe (*z*). you ſee the commandement runs that we do not onely keep the *Sabbath* our ſelves but muſt look that our *Sons*, and our Daughters, our men ſervants, and our maidſervants, and ſtrangers do the ſame. And *Joſhuahs* piety runs thus. (*a*) *I and my houſe will ſerve the Lord.* And *David* ſaith expreſly (*b*), *there ſhall no deceitful perſon dwell in my houſe*, no prophane contemner of religion. And (*c*) he ſpeakes of this as one of the greateſt comforts he had on earth, *that he went with a multitude of them that kept holy day, and led them into the houſe of the Lord*, This if we do not, if we walke not after theſe excellent patterns and examples, if we do not with chearfulneſs go into the Lords Courts, and ſerve the Lord with gladneſs, and come before him with joyfulneſs; if we do not account our dayes and hours pretious that are ſo be-

(*z*) Exod. 20. 10.
(*a*) Joſ. 24. 15.
(*b*) Pſal. 101. 7.
(*c*) Pſal. 42. 4.

beſtowed, if we be not forward to take all holy opertunities, redeeming our time from the world, that we may ſpend them in theſe aſſemblies of Gods people, if we have neither delight nor appetite to the words and Sacraments, or the duties of praiſe and invocation, if we be dull or lumpiſh, heavy and ſpiritleſs in them, if we be not much agrieved to ſee or hear of the congregations being unfrequented or neglected; and glad to ſee, and quick to promote the frequency and fulneſs thereof. It is becauſe we do not underſtand our own happineſs in enjoying the benefit of them. As Chriſt ſaid to the woman of *Samaria*, we do not know the gift of God (*d*). We are ſottiſh and inſenſible of the greatneſs of that priviledge we may have in waiting upon the aſſemblies. And therefore we are ſo prone to forſake the aſſembling of our ſelves together, as the manner of many is. From which grievous ſin God of his infinite mercy preſerve us, making us evermore to delight in his houſe and preſence. For Jeſus Chriſt his ſake to whom with the father, and the Holy Ghoſt be aſcribed all honour and glory, might, majeſty, and dominion, now, and for ever more. *Amen.*

(*d*) Joh. 4. 10.

FINIS.